

THE RED SPHINX

E. U. VALENTINE
AND
S. E. HARPER

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THE RED SPHINX

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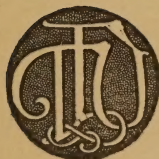
BY

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LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

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MCMVII

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THE RED SPHINX



BOOK I

CHAPTER I

LEONORE CHOOSES

HAD the *New York* already reached Cherbourg—or would she still be in time to meet her son and the girl when they landed? Were her ably-executed plans to be frustrated through accident to the steering gear of her own steamer—a ten-hour delay?

These were the questions Mrs Henry Burton asked herself as the *Kaiser Wilhelm* steamed into the Cherbourg roadstead. To pluck the oft-charred brand, her son, from new fire of folly, Mrs Burton, philanthropic widow of the well-known railway magnate, had, at a moment's notice, taken a special train from Chicago to New York, and hastened on the North German Lloyd racer as its gang plank was being raised. She had nicely calculated that the *Kaiser Wilhelm* would outstrip the earlier but slower boat on which George and Leonore had booked their passage. Certainly all would have been as she

planned had not the breakdown occurred. What, she wondered, had happened during those lost ten hours? Maternal solicitude evoked the vision of an only son hopelessly compromised with her ungrateful *protégée*, Leonore Redway. Their flight to Europe was, at the very least, a scandal, even if it did not involve George's marriage with Leonore.

By her present prompt action, Mrs Henry Burton was displaying the strength of character and ability which her late husband had so highly prized, that he made her trustee of his vast fortune. His widow assumed, with characteristic fortitude, the responsibilities laid upon her declining years. Intuition had served her well in choice of advisers, so that when her son verged into manhood, she had the satisfaction of seeing his inheritance nearly doubled. The young man's bringing-up had been a difficult problem. There was much about his character which gave her uneasiness. Mrs Burton had determinedly planned a son worthy of herself, a son who would be a fit memorial of the sire who begot him. She was not a mother to delude herself, and resolutely she faced all the groping tendencies of George's youth, no matter whither they lead.

Feminine pitfalls, these were what Mrs Burton most apprehended. On more than one occasion she had found it necessary to draw her son from toils deftly spread by daughters of Eve. It was woman, woman, that was the reef of so much tragic wrecking.

Leonore Redway was the daughter of an ill-

paid college professor, who had married a French governess. The father died when Leonore was a child, and the late Henry Burton, mindful of services done him by the departed Redway, had provided the relict with a modest allowance. On her demise, a few years following her husband's, this allowance had passed on in form of an annuity to the daughter. So Leonore owed what was more than average education to Burton coffers and Burton kindness. And her late husband's interest in the girl Mrs Burton had supplemented by gifts of money, by having her at her home during George's course at Harvard, and last, yet not least, in her opinion, by giving Leonore the benefit of much sound advice.

In this Mrs Burton was truly to be commended, for Leonore was anything but a girl after her heart. It was out of a sense of duty to the daughter of her husband's old friend, rather than from affection, that she had fostered the dark-eyed orphan, who, preferring her mother's native tongue to English, spent her time browsing on Victor Hugo and Racine, and early began to show a taste for the theatre.

Mrs Burton had no liking for the stage, but she did not discourage Leonore's pretty talent for parlour elocution. Although the girl often spoke of becoming an actress, her patroness failed to take these ambitions seriously. Many young persons cherished similar dreams. Leonore would outlive the fancy, and, in the meantime, the gift she had of reciting French verse at evening parties helped to give her self-

possession, and to perfect her in a language through which Mrs Burton planned the girl should eventually earn her living.

It was Mrs Burton's purpose that Leonore should become an instructress in French ; and on Leonore's proposing that she should go to New York to continue her French studies there, she did not frown upon the scheme, being perhaps, if truth were told, relieved to have her off her hands. Leonore, on her side, was frankly glad to be free of Mrs Burton's supervision.

When established in New York, Leonore chanced to find a teacher of French, who had also some knowledge of the theatre. He not only perfected her acquaintance with the language she studied under him, but drilled her in dramatic reading. Beneath this tutelage Leonore developed rapidly a histrionic gift, and her teacher, recognising unusual talent for the stage, strongly urged the young woman's going to Paris—a proposition to which Leonore lent eager enough ear.

There were, however, practical obstacles in the way. Mrs Burton would assuredly not assist Leonore towards a profession which she so righteously condemned, and Leonore's annuity alone was unequal to the expenditure. She nevertheless wrote to her patroness to say she had resolved to be an actress, and that she wished to go to Paris to study for the French stage ; would Mrs Burton advance her the amount of her annuity for five years ?

Mrs Burton promptly refused to make any such

arrangement. She could not interfere with Leonore's plans since Leonore was her own mistress; but her conscience forbade her doing anything to further her in a course of which she so disapproved. And she remained inflexible despite Leonore's arguments and pleadings.

At this crisis appeared on the scene Mrs Burton's son George. Leonore encountered him one day in New York, whither he had come for a fling. George Burton had the previous June taken his degree at Harvard, and was devoting himself to "seeing life" before sobering down to one of the important business occupations his mother had in mind for him. Leonore was inspired boldly to solicit George's intercession with his mother. She was in truth so eloquent in presenting her case that the beardless heir to the Burton millions was delighted to take up her cause. George Burton even offered to advance out of his own pocket the sum needed by Leonore, and he promised, with the easy confidence of his years, to put everything straight with his mother.

Thereupon Leonore set about making ready for Europe; and here again young Burton amiably lent her aid. When at length all was prepared Leonore wrote to Mrs Burton, announcing that she had arranged her affairs, and had engaged passage for France, the following week, on the *New York*.

On the day of Leonore's sailing, Mrs Burton received a telegram from her son, saying that he had taken the fancy to spend a few weeks in Europe.

The coincidence was not lost on his mother. Prompt action alone could save George, and Mrs Burton always flattered herself that she was equal to emergencies. At once she chartered a special train for New York, caught a North German Lloyd steamer for Europe, calculating to reach Cherbourg in time to confront the culprits. And this she would have done, had not the hand of accident waylaid her.

Dawn greeted the *Kaiser Wilhelm*, making its way into the Cherbourg harbour. A mysterious auroral whiteness was mounting the edges of the sky, and the sheltered water glimmered in premonitory pearl. Clustering warships stood enfolded in grey vaporous blur. Cherbourg was like a realm of Fata Morgana, in this magic hour of the *Kaiser Wilhelm's* arrival.

On transferring to the tender, Mrs Burton learned that her forebodings were but too true: the *New York* had arrived the night before. But it was still early, and there was time to catch the morning train to Paris, whither the guilty pair were doubtless at that moment speeding.

As she reached the landing, Mrs Burton, who had often stopped over at Cherbourg, received quick recognition from the porter of the *Hôtel de l'Aigle et d'Angleterre*, where she always stayed. The smiling emissary seized Mrs Burton's hand luggage and started with it to where the hotel 'bus waited; but

that lady, calling him back, ordered him to put her things on the Paris train, as she would not stop at Cherbourg.

"But Monsieur and his wife," he said, "are at the hotel." Then, seeing Mrs Burton's surprise: "I had supposed Madame was come to join Monsieur her son."

"My son is still at Cherbourg? In that case you make take my luggage to the hotel."

It was a bright day now—a day of crisp autumnal brilliance. The brief omnibus drive Mrs Burton consumed by pondering this new escapade of her son's; the result of her meditations deepening the heroic set of her lips. A student of physiognomy might have read the whole history of decent womanhood in the stern repose of those features. As in orderly stiffness she sat there in the corner of the lumbering vehicle, Mrs Burton suffered the humiliation maternal necessities imposed. It outraged the feminine in her to be upon this mission; it was the sacrifice of every instinct of a nature coldly intolerant of all wrong-doing. It was alone the mother's resolves that triumphed over an innate fastidious repugnance for the task she set herself.

That George had indulged in a vulgar affair of gallantry was what Mrs Burton believed. She was sure that he had no preconceived notion of marrying Leonore, and that if they had been married previous to sailing, it was due to the girl's intriguing talents. It was Leonore she feared — Leonore, who was as

strong as her son was weak. She had distrusted her always, and now with what reason!

Thus Mrs Burton argued, battling against the thought that, whatever wrong had been done, it was wrong that her son, if fortunately he still were free, must needs repair at the altar. She sighed; and at that moment the 'bus drew up in front of the shabby little hotel.

She was greeted with ill-disguised consternation by the round-faced German proprietor who had not forgot his wealthy patroness of former years, and by intuitions of his class scented trouble for the young people who had arrived the night before. Young George Burton was far too free-handed a guest not to be shielded in a scrape; and the appearance of his mother, mine host was sure, would be as unwelcome as apparently it was unexpected.

Stammering out obsequious banalities of welcome, he offered to show his guest to her room; but these effusions Mrs Burton unceremoniously cut short.

"No, I shall not go to my room at present," she said. "Serve my coffee here. And tell my son that I wish to see him."

"The son of Madame?"

"Certainly. Why do you pretend that my son is not at your hotel?" was Mrs Burton's impatient answer. And the proprietor meekly bowed himself out of her presence.

A half-hour later the door was pushed open,

and a young man entered. George Burton, tall, of slight but athletic appearance, had trace of self-indulgence in his face; but for all that it was a youth of fine attraction.

"Well, mother," was his greeting, "what does this mean? What has brought you to Europe?"

"I came, George," was the august reply, "because it was my duty to come. Your telegram left me no alternative."

"My telegram? What was in my telegram to worry you, may I ask? I decided to run over to Paris for a few weeks. I've been through my college grind, and I've a right to a little fun. Really, mother," he went on in an injured tone, "you might think I was in leading-strings; you seem to forget that I am no longer a child. All my life I've been submitting to your interference; and it's time now to protest!" He began pacing the room.

"Sit down," his mother said in her even tones, "and let us discuss matters calmly. But first, tell me the extent of your folly: your mother must know the worst—are you married to Leonore Redway?"

"No, I'm not," was the brusque reply.

"Thank God!" Mrs Burton piously breathed; "thank God for that. Then I am not too late to save you from yourself."

"Now, mother, don't begin your heroics!" George ejaculated.

"Yes," Mrs Burton reiterated solemnly, "to save

you from yourself. You need not tell me how she has decoyed you—I see it all without your telling me. Fortunately, she has not succeeded in marrying you ; I am grateful for that, at least.”

“I won’t have you speak in that manner of Leonore!” George returned indignantly. “She has done nothing to deserve your abuse.”

“She has tried to compromise you—she persuaded you to cross the ocean with her.”

“There you do her injustice ; for she did not even know I was on board until the *New York* sailed. I saw quite a deal of Leonore in New York ; we grew to be good friends. She consulted me about her future ; she wished to come abroad to study acting. Everybody says she has extraordinary talent ; and I am sure she’s got it in her to succeed on the stage. She prefers Paris to New York, and you can’t blame her, for she is half French. I frankly acknowledge that I encouraged her in what she has done ; that her trip abroad is due to me.” His tones betrayed the flattered vanity he experienced in being a young woman’s protector.

“So you fancy that you love her?” Mrs Burton questioned in her calm voice.

“Who’s talking of love?” George impatiently exclaimed. “Can’t a fellow help a girl without being in love with her? Didn’t father interest himself in the family? And”—he brought it out as his trump card—“aren’t we responsible for Leonore?”

"Your generosity does you credit, George." Mrs Burton gave a dry smile. "But if you have Leonore's interests so much at heart, why have you jeopardised her reputation by accompanying her abroad? Have you not been enough in the world to know what the world must infer from such conduct? You have given people the right to call Leonore your mistress. The passengers on the *New York* must have thought of her in that light—just as the proprietor of this hotel obviously takes the same view of the case."

Burton reddened, as his mother paused to give her words weight.

"But, understand me," she continued more gently, "I consider you less at fault, my son, than Leonore. Had Leonore the proper feelings, she never could have allowed herself to be placed in such a position."

"I intend to marry Leonore, mother!"

He was surprised at his own words; for it was only Mrs Burton's speech that stung him to this angry decision. George Burton had no intention of making Leonore his wife when he yielded to the impulse of crossing the ocean with her. All his life he had known Leonore Redway from her being a frequent inmate of his mother's home; but it was not until their chance encounter in New York that he had succumbed to her fascinations.

Mrs Burton's grey eyes considered him, half-divining the reason for this resolve. She saw that

her last speech was a mistake; but she did not despair: her resources were not exhausted.

"Very well, George," she replied. "Marry Leonore, since my wishes do not weigh with you. I had not looked for this from my son; but why expect the consideration so seldom shown parents nowadays? If, however, you marry her, you must accept the consequences. I consider Leonore Redway an unsuitable wife for you; she is a woman that will be detrimental in every way to your career. With Leonore Redway as your wife, wealth would be wantonly abused. Your salvation of character can only come through facing the world like the average young man: by your being made to meet life's wholesome difficulties. Your father left me the control of his fortune, and I feel the solemn responsibilities of my trust. Much as I love you, I should consider it a wrong to my sacred trusteeship to do with it—as a mother's heart would dictate." Mrs Burton's voice failed for a moment of its heroic timbre. "George," she said, "I cannot hand over your fortune to you if you marry Leonore Redway. Understand that I say I cannot, rather than I will not; and believe that, whatever the effort cost me, I shall not weaken on this point."

"Do as you like about that, mother," her son answered with some heaviness of heart. Then, after a sulky pause: "You mean, I suppose, you'll provide me nothing to live on?"

"No, my son, since my motive springs from no unkindness. I intend to make you an allowance;

but it will not be enough for you to live on; you shall have to enter business without delay. Naturally Leonore will return to America and give up acting." After a moment she continued: "Are you sure that Leonore will be willing to relinquish her ambitions to become your wife under circumstances different from what doubtless she expects? Let me frankly say that I doubt it."

"Of course, she'll give up the stage if I ask it," was George's proud reply.

"In that case, tell Leonore I shall see her." She saw he hesitated, and she added with dignity: "It is only fitting, George, that your future wife pay her respects to me."

Mrs Burton looked critically at Leonore Redway, when a little later she appeared in the sitting-room. The young woman showed self-possession; she even advanced confidently with outstretched hand. The magnate's widow mentally noted that her *protégée* had seldom appeared to such advantage as at that moment. How much of this coolness of Leonore's was assumed? Leonore was a born actress; for the first time the fact was plain to Mrs Burton. She saw, too, what people meant when they called Leonore's a tragic appearance. Tall to stateliness, the figure of the girl had a supple fulness; large and dark, her eyes gazed from under a wide brow; and the mouth, red-lipped and irregular, had a mobile power; her abundant hair, of rather coarse fibre, was blond. Leonore Redway stamped herself

on others as an elemental nature ; as a woman who might, perhaps, under emotional stress, be checked neither by conscience nor convention.

Mrs Burton observed Leonore with despairing visions of her son's life should this marriage be consummated. In her simultaneously rose the resolve that she would defeat, no matter by what means, the designs of the clever young woman who had landed George Burton in her toils.

She ignored the hand Leonore extended, as she said formally :

"Leonore, my son tells me he has asked you to marry him. I must say that this hasty and clandestine courtship has not pleased me. You have conducted yourself without showing proper respect for yourself, or for me as George's mother. But I ignore this, as I ignore your wilful disregard for my wishes in studying for the stage. Fortunately, what I have done for you was born of a sense of duty ; I expected no gratitude."

"Gratitude towards you, Mrs Burton? Did gratitude call for such a sacrifice—that I should give up the dearest ambition of my life? You had not the right to ask such a thing. My art—my art is everything to me !" Leonore spoke passionately, with a quick frown.

"Yet you forgot your art to listen to my son."

"I am a woman, Mrs Burton."

"It certainly is flattering to my son that you so willingly give up these cherished aims of yours.

What he has to offer you will, I fear, hardly compensate you."

"I was not thinking of compensations when I told George I would marry him."

"I hope that is true, Leonore, although it surprises me a little—knowing you as I do. I indeed rejoice that love has made you more spontaneous. If what you say is sincere, I shall feel differently towards you. Listen to me, then. I have told George that I think it advisable for him to make his own way in the world; I consider it best for you both that you should not enjoy too easy circumstances. My son consents to this arrangement, and he assures me that you are ready to return with him to Chicago."

"Go back to Chicago, Mrs Burton?" Leonore's deep voice had a startled note. "Give up Paris—my studies there? Why, Mrs Burton, that is impossible; I should not think of consenting!"

"You can hardly marry George and be an actress."

"Why, it was your son who advised my going to Paris; it was he who advanced me the money to pursue my plans. Did you not?" And Leonore appealed to her lover.

"I know I did, Leonore," he stammered; "but you see, things are different now. I must go home and enter business at once, and, naturally, I can't have my wife living alone in Paris."

Leonore's gaze again sought the mother. Mrs Burton sat composedly at the little curtained window of the hotel sitting-room. Her august figure was

gowned in an expensive sobriety that marked a fashion of her own. From high temples her grey hair was severely gathered back. Something in this authoritative and self-satisfied bearing of Mrs Burton's irritated Leonore, increased her feeling of outrage.

"I cannot agree!" was her exclamation. "I cannot go back to Chicago and abandon my art! Your son ought not to ask it of me."

"George is making a great sacrifice for you, Leonore," Mrs Burton filled in the pause. "You should not hesitate to give up something for him."

"Something?" Leonore cried scornfully. "My art is more than something—it is life to me. And you really ask this, George?"

Young Burton's embarrassment was acute: he did not look at her.

"I don't know what to say, Leonore. It is true, I did advise your going to Paris; but you see that the situation is no more the same. I told mother that you would be willing—that I thought you cared enough for me—to give up your acting."

Leonore was mute; her heart throbbed, and her brain was a whirl of emotion. How was she to decide? She fixed indignant eyes on the magnate's widow—no sympathy, no help there. Between the strong, hostile mother and the weak, half-hearted son, she felt decision rested with her.

"No, Mrs Burton," she said finally, "I cannot permit your son to make for me the sacrifices you mention. Naturally, I did not suppose that his

marrying me would alter his material prospects. It is as unjust to him as it is insulting to me. I give you back your liberty, George. No, do not speak—I have decided.”

“But I shall speak,” young Burton broke in with awakening spirit. “Have I complained of sacrifices? I am ready to marry you under any circumstances. Why do you do me such injustice? Perhaps it is my poverty you dread? Never fear! In a few years I’ll make my pile like my father before me!”

Leonore hesitated. For the first time in this interview she felt the appeal of George Burton’s love. But—give up Paris?—the theatre? Abandon her aspiring dreams for the dull, humdrum life that her lover now offered her? No, she could not!—Not even to pluck the sweets of triumph over Mrs Burton. Inclination caused her to give vent to a pride she persuaded herself his mother’s insults justified. Under the cover of offended dignity, Leonore made a virtue of doing what it was her choice to do.

“I fear it is a little late for such speeches,” she said cuttingly. “You have let your mother treat me as if I were some adventuress who had entrapped you. Were I to marry you, do you think I could forget the humiliation of this moment? No; it is better that we should part. And since all this is painful to me——” Leonore rose.

“Surely, Leonore, you are not going to leave me so?” the young man implored, intercepting her departure from the room.

"Let me pass, please!" she said so imperiously that, stung, Burton stood aside.

"Leonore!" Mrs Burton now spoke; and Leonore paused at the door. "What do you intend to do when you reach Paris? A young girl like yourself in an unknown city——"

"Do not distress yourself on my account, Mrs Burton; I shall be with a friend of my mother's, the Comtesse des Mazures."

"And your finances—Is there nothing I can do?"

"Nothing, thank you. I am quite able to make my own living; I shall not starve." She smiled bitterly.

"Listen, Leonore!" Mrs Burton could afford the maternal tone she now adopted. "In France, a young girl without *dot*—Should you ever wish to marry, you must feel that I shall always be ready to provide you a suitable sum."

"I have no intention of marrying," Leonore returned shortly. And, ignoring the hand that Mrs Burton offered, as Mrs Burton had ignored hers when she entered, Leonore left the room.

An hour later found Leonore at the railway station. She had departed the hotel without letting the Burtons know. George had sent her an urgent message asking for a last meeting, but she returned a resolute refusal. Since she had decided on her course there could only be pain for both in any further interviews.

She was already settled in her carriage and the train was preparing to start when George Burton hastily appeared on the platform. The expression on his face was so sincerely full of distress that Leonore felt a sudden pang of remorse over having left him without a farewell.

Catching sight of her the young man sprang into the carriage and took her in his arms.

"Leonore," he said miserably, "this is cruel and unjust to me. I could not believe it when I learned that you were gone. There is still time. Give up this plan of yours. It is sheer pride on your part to break with me utterly in this way. Wait, and I shall manage to win my mother over. Come back to the hotel; consent to what she asks of us. It will tide over the present trouble; and later you shall go to Paris and study for the stage if you still wish it. Leonore, I love you—our quarrel has shown me how great my love for you is!"

"I cannot, George," she answered with emotion. "Do not tempt me to say yes; I should only regret it afterwards. Believe me, I have decided wisely. I am not the wife for you. Our love was a foolish dream from which we have both awakened. Your mother is right—you will recognise it in the end."

"Leonore," he answered sadly, "you have played with me—you never cared, you *couldn't* have cared!"

"No, George, I did not play with you—I am not that sort of woman. I cared too much—I cared

enough to forget everything but my feelings—feelings I should have repressed. I loved you more than you loved me. What separates us is what would always have come between us—my art. George, do not think ill of me. Art is not with me a vain, foolish woman's thirst for the glare of publicity. That is what your mother believes—that is why she has treated me so unkindly. I was born for the stage: everything in me answers its voice. I may break my heart because of it; it may trample the woman out of me; circumstances may be too strong, the end—I do not know what the end may be, George! nevertheless, I do not hesitate, for it is my destiny. Good-bye—and forget me!" And she held out her hand to him.

George took it, holding it long as he looked in her eyes.

"Leonore, you are too young to know what you are doing. Art is a fine word to you now. When you come to find how hard an actress's life really is——"

"It will make no difference," she answered. "I never expect to be happy as some people are happy. I do not ask it. Who ever gained anything without sacrifice? And art is sacrifice—I am not too young to know that!"

"But what kind of sacrifice, Leonore? Perhaps of what's best in you!"

"The best that is in me, George, is art!"

"You don't know Paris—how cruel it is."

"I shall learn. Time teaches everything."

The guards were slamming doors and calling :

“ *En voiture, messieurs !* ”

George still lingered.

“ Ah, Leonore, if ever time teaches you to love ! ”

“ Suppose it does ? — It will make life more dramatic.”

“ But if it makes it Tragedy ? ”

“ *En voiture, messieurs, s'il vous plait.* ”

CHAPTER II

THE SACRÉ-CŒUR OF MONTMARTRE

IT was nightfall of the same day when Leonore reached Paris. In her haste to leave Cherbourg and the Burtons, she had taken the first train that offered—an accommodation train. The long journey, with the tedious waits at innumerable way-stations, had worn on Leonore. During the cab drive from the Gare Saint Lazare to the Ile Saint Louis, where the Comtesse des Mazures lived, she leaned back on her seat, indifferent to the sparkle and excitement of nocturnal Paris—of that Paris she had longed for and now reached under circumstances so different from those she had pictured. Life for the time being had lost all colour and charm; she felt only the depression of her solitary entrance on new scenes that had promised so much delight. The shadow of the Cherbourg parting rested not alone on her spirits, but on Paris itself. At what bitter price had she bought freedom and the privilege of study in a foreign land! Love had been ruthlessly sacrificed for art, and would art compensate her? Now that she had irrevocably broken with George

Burton, she persuaded herself that his love for her was stronger than she had believed it to be at Cherbourg. Artist though she was, she was a woman also; and she had allowed ambition and Mrs Burton to deprive her of what every woman prizes. Now must her profession be indeed everything to her—love was banished from her life!

The Comtesse des Mazures occupied on the Ile Saint Louis an apartment in what had formerly been the stately *hôtel* of her ancestors. She was a small, alert old lady, with white ringleted hair guarded by a huge tortoise-shell comb, and her lean frame, suggestive of pious—or perhaps economical—fastings was sheathed in shiny black taffeta which had, like the Countess herself, witnessed better days. The furniture of the apartment had a sombre, yesterday elegance; there were great map-like blots of mould on the walls, and the hangings, of threadbare richness, smelt of age. From dull gilt frames, half-obliterated faces, some wry, some smiling, looked stiffly down on the poverty of the spacious drawing-room; and Leonore saw that the Des Mazures family counted not a few *abbés* and soldiers in the centuries past.

The Countess received Leonore with great kindness on account of her mother, a school friend from long-gone convent days, and would, in her curiosity as to her guest's tastes, ideas and previous life, have kept her talking to a late hour, had Leonore not pled fatigue and escaped to bed. There, almost

as soon as her head touched the pillow, she fell asleep, her youth triumphing over the despondency which had seized her on her arrival at Paris.

Leonore's slumbers next day were broken by shrill cries and sounds of early life outside her window. She sprang from bed, and eagerly threw open the heavy shutters on her first daylight picture of Paris. Below stretched one grey arm of the Seine, with its bridges wedding the Ile Saint Louis with the *rive gauche*, the older side of the city. Over climbing roof-tops on the opposite river-bank, Leonore had sight of the grand dome of the Panthéon that crowns the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève. This she was quick to recognise from photographs; and its familiar beauty gave her a bright feeling that she was indeed in her coveted Paris.

Her glance wandered to the quay beneath, where hucksters plied their trades. Old women, in picturesque dress, pushed carts laden with fresh vegetables: carrots, cauliflowers, artichokes, and salad stuffs of Paris — *romaine, endives, barbe-de-capucin*. Among discordant voices Leonore's quick ear singled out a clear and liquid bass. Its owner, a knife-grinder, marched along with free, swinging gait while he sang, "*Qui a des ciseaux, des couteaux à repasser? Voilà le repasseur!*" This musical street cry charmed Leonore.

Rest had dispelled her melancholy. Again her ambitions rose in a surge of the blood that was

like intoxication. Yes, she had chosen wisely, after all. The morning sunshine, this first view of Paris, dispelled doubts about that. Art was first with her. She felt that Paris spoke to her like one that claims its own; that it promised her fame, fortune, all that was heart's desire. Here, on soil which had been her mother's home, her true destiny would find fulfilment. George Burton had in the night become a shadow, a shadow that might haunt her heart, but could never more have power over her life. With a gesture that would have won her stage applause, Leonore kissed a hand to the fair auspicious view and turned quickly to dress herself. This first day she meant to spend exploring Paris.

The Countess manifested polite surprise at seeing Leonore up-betimes. She had just returned from early Mass at the little church of Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, and was bent on telling Leonore of the good *curé* of the parish—what a comforting and helpful confessor he was. To her pious chatter Leonore lent a negligent ear as she drank her coffee, which was not very good—certainly not strong—and enjoyed the crusty fresh *croissants* served with it.

She told her hostess that she was going to the bank and would not be home to lunch. This announcement seemed to shock the Countess.

"Not be home to *déjeuner*, mademoiselle?" she said. "Where, then, will you have it?"

Leonore started to say, "At a restaurant," but checked herself; she remembered she was in

France, where self-respecting young women do not appear in public places unattended ; so, instead, she answered : "With some friends I met on the steamer."

Soon she was on the quay. It was an exquisite morn, with a wisp of mist still in the air, but promise of brightness later. An exhilarating tang of autumn touched Leonore's cheeks with crimson. She crossed the bridge that connects the Ile Saint Louis with the Island of the Cité, like a small boat taken in tow by a large one.

Directly in front of her rose the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, its centuried darkness relieved with grey soft streaks ; marvellous flying buttresses giving soaring lightness to the majestic mass. In the rear of the great church there is a rather dreary little garden—le jardin de l'Archevêché—deserted at this season, for Paris foliage drops early, and September is autumnal in character and colouring. Leonore strolled a while under the blighted trees that she might get nearer views of the cathedral choir. But the gloom of the garden soon drove her forth. This was not the Paris she sought. Passing through the iron gates, she noticed, opposite the entrance, a low, frowning edifice. An old woman, supported by a younger, tottered down the steps. Her companion was volubly talking in effort to comfort her. A plain-looking hearse was drawn up at the doorway, and several *croque-morts* in their black garb stood near by. The *gardien* of the enclosure

— the smallest parks and squares in Paris must have their *gardien*—was posted at the gate.

“What building is that opposite?” Leonore asked.

“The Morgue, mademoiselle,” his answer was. “It is there they take the bodies of suicides, and people killed in accidents.”

Of all resting-places for the nameless dead, the Paris Morgue is the most revolting, the most lugubrious imagination may picture. For this *chapelle-ardente* of crime and misfortune is not only a repository for corpses, but also serves as a resort for the entertainment of the morbid-minded, who, flocking to the house of horror, stand, their faces pressed against the glass screen, staring at the bodies exposed behind.

Leonore felt a clutching at heart; she knew this dreadful place from the realistic description of it given by Zola in “Thérèse Raquin.” She turned away quickly.

Regaining the quay, she walked along the stately south side of the cathedral. To Leonore’s untrained taste the sacristy of Viollet-le-Duc seemed more beautiful in its over-ornate Gothic than the ancient basilica it adjoined.

She took a peep inside the cathedral, but its unlighted gloominess at this hour did not tempt her to explore further. What she wanted this first day of Paris was light, life—the present, and not the past.

Hailing a cab, she drove to the Hôtel du Louvre

to see a friend, and from there to the Crédit Lyonnais. The drive was not long, but many were the famous buildings passed. With a thrill of reverence she recognised the Théâtre Français, the "House of Molière," scene of Talma's and of Rachel's triumphs! The carriage mounted a broad, busy avenue, and there at the end the Grand Opéra appeared. It was almost with personal pride that Leonore beheld these temples of art; their magnificence assured her of the high respect in which dramatic and musical genius is held among Latin races. Leonore was in France, in a country where to be an *artiste dramatique* was one of the noblest ambitions; and she thought scornfully of Mrs Burton and her prejudices. The figure of winged fame on the façade of the Opéra floated before Leonore's eyes, in its hand a golden wreath of reputation which would compensate her for all sacrifice!

Later, as Leonore paced along the now crowded boulevards, she abandoned herself to the characteristic Parisian habit of forgetting everything in mixing with the passing show. Yet in this desultory enjoyment of Paris street-life there came to her a discomfiting sense of confusion. Leonore liked to have her orientation, that she might move with confident independence. She wished she could ascend in a balloon and secure a bird's-eye view of the city.

Suddenly, at a street crossing on the Boulevard

des Italiens, Leonore caught sight of a distant building that seemed almost a vision, so fantastic was its dazzling whiteness. Instinctively Leonore stayed her steps, while the words of Lohengrin's song :

" In far-off lands there is a castle,
Its name is Montsalvat,"

came to mind, and a passage her father often had quoted from the old German *Parzival-Lied* :

" He only who wings hath borrowed from the wind
Might reach this Marvel's gabled towers."

It was the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, which from heights of Montmartre overlooks Paris, as if, in the name of Holy Roman Church, it cast defiance at the tide of irreligion mounting from below.

" How does one reach the Church of the Sacré-Cœur?" she asked of a policeman.

" It is a good end of a walk, madame," was the answer, in Paris vernacular ; " and then there is to climb like a cat."

The *sergent-de-ville* told her where she might find an omnibus which would take her to the famous flights of steps leading to the church.

The drive to Montmartre fascinated Leonore, like everything else in fascinating Paris. She had mounted on to the so-called *impériale* of the lumbering huge vehicle, and from there, while the horses strained up the steep incline, Leonore had leisure to read the advertisements which cover house-fronts of

Paris from ground-floor to garret. And curious they seemed to Leonore: signs giving the oddest names to shops, patent designations of nostrums, appellations of various, and sometimes questionable, institutions. Leonore laughed over the "100,000 Pink Corsets," "The Pig that knits," the "Bengal Tiger Worsted." (What an unnecessarily fierce animal for such a mild domestic article!) She wondered at the "Academy of France, District of the City of Paris, General Association and Special Institution for combating the Terrible Plague that claims THOUSANDS of victims, and DESTROYS the hair of——" the sentence was too long to read, even on the 'bus that so wearily struggled up the "sacred hill" of Montmartre.

The omnibus crossed the "Outer Boulevards," not crowded thoroughfares like those in the heart of the city, but wide avenues, having in the middle tree-planted promenades, with little *cafés*, and petty shops, and concert-halls, and *cabarets artistiques* on each side. It seemed to Leonore that everything usually belonging inside of shops and *cafés* had wandered out on the side-walks.

Beyond these boulevards the omnibus stopped, and Leonore was told that she had reached the end of her drive.

A short walk brought her to the foot of the long flights of steps leading up to the church.

Up the five flights Leonore toiled. A small public garden, curiously niched in the side of the

hill, attracted her; she entered and rested there on an iron bench facing the city lying far below. The morning fog still obscured the view, saving what was in the immediate foreground, and that was commonplace enough. High apartment houses of a meaningless monotony, and beyond a sea of grey roofs that lost itself in the greater grey sea of mist. Directly beneath, a little square with scrubby trees and a band-stand; and more high apartment houses, and more grey roofs, and more mist. To the right, the ugly funicular railway with its clumsy cars crawling up and down shining rails like industrious measuring-worms. Dirty-cheeked urchins and slovenly nurses occupied the many benches of the park, to which an artificial waterfall provided the last touch of vulgarity. The only picturesque feature to Leonore's fancy was the barefoot monks—bearded Franciscans, with brown frocks knotted round their waists, white-garbed Dominicans, clean-shaven young priests in curious calotes—trudging up to the great Church of the Sacred Heart.

How disappointing the church was now that she was close to it, and it had seemed so beautiful from a distance! It was crude, positively unlovely, with its weather-stained scaffolding. Curiously enough, the building looked smaller, now she was close at hand.

Cheated in the object of her pilgrimage—the mist still concealed the view—Leonore turned to visit the church.

She achieved the last flight of steps to the portico

—strangely narrow and unimpressive for such a large building, and pushed open the wooden door.

Leonore had expected to experience a religious uplift in the sacred edifice; but the interior in its meanness disappointed her also.

Kneeling on a chair she hurriedly repeated a few prayers to the Sacred Heart, humbling herself before the Host ever exposed on the High Altar of this privileged church.

A wave of distress swept the would-be penitent as she knelt there. She had started forth that morning in radiant spirits, ready to catch enthusiasm from all she saw; and already her mood had lowered.

Somehow she felt that just as this church, of such dreamlike beauty from afar, had lost its magic for her on approaching it, when she attained her goal in life she would find the bloom departed and the glory gone.

And now the woman in her cried aloud for the forfeited consolation which love alone can offer. She had given up marriage for ambition. Was she strong enough to climb by herself the Montmartre of art? Ah, the fatigue that weighed her down in mounting a while ago the interminable stairs which brought her here! Was it not a warning of what her artistic weariness would be?

So Leonore's thoughts recurred to Cherbourg: George Burton lived again in her heart; once more the shadow was become substance.

Without being a nature instinctively religious,

Leonore had kept in the path of the Roman Catholic education her mother had given her. She had accepted—without much conviction, it was true—the teachings of this faith, and regularly had attended Mass and the Confessional, as a young girl; but for some years now Leonore had neglected religious observances. Here, kneeling in the holy edifice of Montmartre, the realisation of her Church's demands came sharply upon her. From weakness or from passion—it mattered not—she had sinned; and what heavily oppressed her at that moment was the thought that she had neglected the reparation offered. The sacrament of marriage was, she knew, commanded by the Church, and she had deliberately refused that. The withstaying motives were offended pride, personal ambition—motives the Church condemned: this she told herself. Yet Leonore suffered little of the remorse that she had been taught was natural for one of her sex to feel. She was surprised by her apathy—she could not feel a changed woman.

George Burton's coming to Europe with her, his taking passage on the same steamer without her knowledge, had been a definite plan of his. They would enjoy a few weeks abroad; after which he intended to forget Leonore, as he expected she would forget him. On several occasions during the trip he had, it was true, breathed vague reference to marriage. Leonore, the stronger nature, had loved more deeply than Burton anticipated; realising the extent of her love for him, she believed in the

sincerity of his avowals ; and she had by her own force carried him along the current of her feelings. On reaching Cherbourg they comprehended the need of a definite solution to their relations. The arrival of Mrs Burton had called them from dreams — awakened a world of material consideration. Then was it that the mother's insults, added to calculation of her future interests, had changed Leonore. Wounded by her lover's faint-hearted championship, by his willingness to sacrifice her ambitions, Leonore blinded herself to obligations owing the man who, after all, was forfeiting a fortune to keep his promise. Her sentiments suffering rapid diminution, however, she had found it easy to persuade herself that stung pride was a real and justifiable motive in breaking with him.

CHAPTER III

PARIS AT HER FEET

WHEN Leonore came out of the Sacré-Cœur, a cry of wonder escaped her. During the half-hour she had been within, the fog hanging over the valley of the Seine had dispersed, and majestic panorama greeted her eyes. From the platform of the church she could behold the full grandeur of the scene. At first she did not take notice of special objects; it was the whole picture that pleased her. She was surprised at the size of the city, which lay in an immense basin surrounded on almost all sides by hills. The air was crystal-clear now; the sun shone brightly; and every dome, every tower stood forth. Leonore picked out Notre-Dame; that exquisite spire rising also from the Cité, she knew, was the Sainte-Chapelle; she recognised the long roof of the Louvre with its mansarded *pavillons*, and, far to the right, the graceful, gilded dome of the Invalides, Napoleon's tomb; there, on past the cathedral, seated on its hill was the stately Panthéon; and besides these, Leonore saw towers, palaces, temples that were unknown to her—vast and wondrous sweep.

“A marvellous city, is it not, madame?” said a

grave voice full of sweetness. It was an aged priest who stood by her side.

"Yes, marvellous indeed, *mon père*," she answered. "It is my first view of Paris; I arrived only last night."

"And your first visit has been to the Sacré-Cœur? You are perhaps a pilgrim?"

"No; I came for the view. I was so eager to know Paris that I wanted to see it all at a single glance."

"But madame is not a foreigner?"

"Yes; I am an American."

"Then surely from New Orleans; for you speak like a Frenchwoman."

Leonore was flattered at the compliment.

"I have spoken French always; it was my mother who taught me, as she taught me to love Paris. She was a Parisienne," she explained with some pride.

The priest indicated various points of interest in the city spread below.

"For me, madame," the old man mused, "Paris is a city of memories; for you, perhaps, it is a city of hopes? You have come here to live?"

"Yes, to study—to work," she said, with a flush of ardour.

"Ah, you are an artist, then?"

"I am studying for the stage."

The priest glanced at her.

"It is a life full of dangers. I hope you have not chosen lightly, my daughter. Surely, there are other careers, other spheres of life, that attract you?"

"No, none. I have given up a great deal to study acting. I love my art; it is everything to me."

"If it is your art you love, and not mere success, it may be that you are right. Keep your enthusiasm, but do not lose yourself in your work. Live for art, and the nobler your life, the nobler your art will be."

"I aspire to what is highest on the stage," Leonore answered with pride. "I hope to play the grand classic *rôles*: Pauline, Hermione, Phèdre—above all, Phèdre."

"I have seen the Rachel act Phèdre."

"You have seen Rachel?"

"Yes," the priest said, smiling at her eagerness. "Yes, I am old enough to have seen the Rachel. And I have not forgotten her! She made me feel the consequences of sin as few sermons have ever done. Should you come to act Phèdre, remember, my daughter, that it was written by a man of deep religious convictions; that the Phèdre of Racine is essentially different from the Phèdre of the Greeks. She deplores her sin, she struggles against it; she is almost Christian in her remorseful self-accusation. An actress once told me that when she acted Phèdre she so identified herself with the *rôle* that she felt herself capable of committing the incestuous sin that Phèdre, after all, was only guilty of meditating. I think that actress was wrong."

"I can understand that—I think an actress *should* live her part. Must one not abandon oneself to the emotions one would express?"

"No, that is altogether a false idea! Do not imagine that acting requires giving oneself up to the passions of the part. Preserve the personality; keep your individual life apart from and above your life as an artist."

"But to act Phèdre greatly," urged Leonore, holding to her point, "surely one must be able to feel like a Phèdre."

"A dangerous thesis that, my daughter. In acting Phèdre, show what an unlawful passion can make of a woman naturally noble and virtuous, what calamities it may draw down upon the innocent, what remorse to the guilty. Then Phèdre is a great moral lesson. Do not let yourself be deceived by those who teach otherwise. Be true to yourself, and you will be true to your art."

Leonore, made thoughtful by this conversation, walked with slow steps down the steep path, her eyes fixed on the vast view of the city—the city she meant to conquer and fill with name and fame. She felt caught up in spirit, newly consecrated to her art. In descending she chose the stairs that led directly to the little Place Saint Pierre, immediately below the *Butte*, and then by the winding, narrow streets to the Outer Boulevards.

On reaching the Place Pigalle—active and crowded part of these boulevards—Leonore hesitated, looking around her for some restaurant where she might take luncheon. After her long morning excursion she was hungry. There were several little *cafés* and

restaurants on the square, but they did not look inviting. What most attracted Leonore was a low building with stained glass windows—evidently a *café*, for there were rows of chairs and tables out on the pavement. The name, the “Abbaye de Thélème,” brought up memories of the huge folio edition of Rabelais with Doré’s illustrations which had been in her father’s library, and was a source of childish delight because of the fantastic pictures. Leonore entered and took a seat. In the centre of the hall-like room, growing up through the floor, was a tree, its veteran trunk encircled by a table. This hall and the adjoining rooms were lighted by large windows of stained glass depicting the exploits of Gargantua. The one opposite Leonore’s table represented the giant straddling the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, and she studied it with some amusement.

Under the window sat two men: the younger, slight, with Van Dyck beard, was dressed elegantly but in the artist mode—red silk stock, black velvet coat, full trousers—the costume of Gavarni prints; his plainer-dressed companion was much more unusual-looking: as dark as the other was blond, virile and forceful-faced, as the other was delicate and refined, the man’s rugged features, gloomed by a mane of blue-black hair, stamped themselves on Leonore’s memory.

“I was right, Fidus,” the younger man observed; “you see, she is reading the *New York Herald*.”

“Perhaps so. But her French, when she spoke to

the waiter? And her appearance? Surely a Yankee never spoke French like that, or had so expressive a face. One would say a *tragédienne*? That blond hair and the dark eyes—she is really beautiful!”

“What has come over you, Fidus?” said the other, smiling. “You are not usually so enthusiastic about strangers!”

“I am thinking what a Red Sphinx she would make!”

“Why not ask her, then, to create the part, if you have really found your Red Sphinx?”

“Yes, if it were enough that she should look it, René! My Red Sphinx must have talent, too.”

They rose to go; and Leonore noticed that the older man was slightly deformed—his fine head being rather grotesquely sunken between the shoulders.

Leonore finished her luncheon; after which she went out on the square, pausing at a Colonne Morris to study the theatre programmes. A series of performances of Leconte de Lisle’s *Erinnyes* was announced at the Odéon with an unusual cast that included Madame Segond-Weber; Leonore had seen her act in America, and had extravagantly admired her, and she studied the programme with intent interest.

Not far away the two men stood watching her. They had lingered at the iron gate of a big white house facing the Place Pigalle, and the upper storey of which, from its glass roofing and immense window,

was evidently a studio—doubtless that of the young man in the red stock and velvet jacket.

“See, she is studying the theatre column,” said the man addressed as Fidus. “Strange if, after all, she *were* an actress!”

“And stranger still,” his companion laughed, “if she turned out to be the Red Sphinx.”

CHAPTER IV

THE COURS BASSOT

MADAME Segond-Weber's Cassandra in the *Erinnyes* of Leconte de Lisle made a deep impression on Leonore. She had seen the artist in America, where she had acted with Mounet-Sully, and Leonore had liked her, though caring little for the parts she played. But in the *Erinnyes* she had magnificent opportunities, and she was equal to them. Leonore determined that *rôle* should be one of the first she should study, and after the *matinée* she bought the play at one of the picturesque book-stalls under the Odéon arcades. But the Comtesse des Mazures, with whom immediately on her arrival in Paris she had begun reading the French classics, advised her to confine her attentions to Corneille and Racine, and truly Leonore found Leconte de Lisle's adaptation from Æschylus too difficult for a histrionic beginner.

These readings with the Countess were highly valuable to Leonore, for her hostess proved to be a woman of culture, at home with the literature of the seventeenth century, of the *grand siècle*, the French call it. From her Leonore learned much that cannot be acquired from text-books, and "histories of

literature." One of the Countess's favourite occupations for many years had been attendance at the public lecture courses of the Collège de France and of the Sorbonne; and she delighted in telling what "Monsieur Deschanel" thought of Corneille, what "Monsieur Larroumet" said about the Port-Royal. Thus Leonore reaped the harvest of the Countess's lecture-going habit. It was true, the good lady would piously have confined their readings to Bossuet and Fénelon; but Leonore argued that if she was to go on the stage she must read plays, not sermons; and, won by her pupil's cleverness and enthusiasm, the Countess resigned herself to her old friend's daughter becoming an actress, though at first she tried to dissuade her from a calling so unhallowed.

As soon as the season for them began, Leonore went as regular spectator to the classic *matinées* at the Comédie Française, and to the "Mondays" and "Thursdays" of the Odéon. By this means, she acquainted herself with a great number of standard French plays. Leonore's enthusiasm was always for Racine. Corneille seemed cold; and for the comedies of Molière she had little taste, even while enjoying the admirable way in which they were acted at the Française.

At the Comédie that year the initial performance of the *matinées classiques* was the *Andromaque* of Racine. It was played by the best forces of the company; the two Mounet brothers as Orestes and

Pyrrhus, and Mesdames Bartet and Dudlay in the *rôles* of Andromaque and Hermione. Mounet-Sully's Orestes showed elemental force, and Leonore could think of little else for days after she had seen him. She astonished the Countess by a remarkable reading of Andromaque the next morning. She seemed to have remembered every vocal intonation, every shade and change of the great actor's rendering. The piece was repeated the following week, and Leonore, unable to get a seat, waited for hours at the Gallery entrance. She was artist enough to appreciate on this second occasion, that, great as was Mounet-Sully's acting, the effect was owing to the high level of the whole performance. On the first seeing Leonore's responsive nature had been so moved by Mounet-Sully that she had slighted the other players; but now the pathetic beauty of Madame Bartet, the sombre power of Madame Dudlay and of Paul Mounet, made Leonore feel that here dramatic art touched its highest. She quickly learned both great female *rôles* of the play, and began studying them as acting parts.

In a few months she had studied the principal women's parts in Racine; and now she was ready to place herself under one of the great professors of acting.

Leonore presented herself at the Cours Bassot, where several of the Conservatory professors have classes. Paul Mounet, upon whom her choice fell, at once accepted Leonore as pupil. He told her

that with application she might hope to be admitted to the Conservatory the following autumn.

Leonore began work at the Cours Bassot, and her life became one of ardent and persevering study. Mounet's severest criticism of her acting was that her conception of parts lacked originality, although she carried out, often remarkably, the suggestions he made or ideas inspired by seeing the *rôles* played. Not that Leonore was mere imitator: there was emotional personality in her work but little intellectual initiative.

"You are like the Rachel," he told her one day. "They say she could not act a part unless Samson showed her how; but then she acted it as never Samson or anybody else could! Mademoiselle, you must find your Samson!"

It chanced that soon after Leonore entered Paul Mounet's class, she was given certain scenes to study in the *Lucrèce Borgia* of Victor Hugo. Associated with her in this scene was a medical student, already *interne* of the hospitals, whose enthusiasm for the stage had led him to enter the Cours Bassot. Most of the young men in the class disgusted Leonore by their affected artistic poses or aping of the fashions of dress, mannerisms and personal appearance of well-known actors they admired.

This Louis Damart, on the contrary, was the most natural and spontaneous of mortals. Always the same, whether talking of his Professor, Paul Mounet, for whom he had unbounded admiration, or playing

the part of Roman senator, Spanish grandee or blue-smocked peasant, he had sincerity and self-confidence, but little suppleness of talent. Leonore thought she never would forget the first time she saw him in Victor Hugo's *Hernani*; the scene was that in which the old Duke discovers Don Carlos and Hernani in his niece's chamber. Damart made his entry in this scene as the Duke, and his first gesture of furiously crossing his arms and nodding his head provoked general merriment. The mirth was not lost on the actor, but it did not in the least disconcert him. He continued, and by the time he reached the Duke's superb final outburst of reproach, Damart had clothed the part in such real strength and dignity that the laugh changed to a round of applause. "What personality he has!" Leonore thought; and curiosity disposed her to encourage his friendship.

They often walked part of the way home together after the Cours. Damart lived in the Latin Quarter, and their way was the same, at least as far as the river, where he would leave her.

In these walks Leonore and Damart discussed the *rôles* they were studying and the plays they had seen. He, hearty and outspoken, told Leonore that his family were set upon having him a doctor—his father was leading physician of a small provincial town in the North—but his love of the stage had led him to make desperate attempt to enter the Conservatory.

"If I do not succeed," he once said, "then I must renounce all thought of acting. Next year will put me past the age limit, and my parents will hear of nothing but 'Doctor of Medicine' or '*lauréat du Conservatoire*.' My father is an old man, mademoiselle; I could not disappoint him."

"Then if you do not enter this year you will give up acting?" Leonore said. "How can you—if you love it so?"

"I shall be obliged," Damart answered simply; "it is my father who wishes it."

Work in the *Lucrece Borgia* scenes fostered this intimacy of theirs. To the Cours Bassot came a vivacious young soubrette named Yvonne. Yvonne was an odd type of beauty. Her jet-black hair was done in bandeaux, Cléo de Mérode fashion; her features—brow, mouth, chin—were classically perfect, all except the nose—a ridiculous little turned-up nose it was, a real Parisian nose of sprightly impudence. Leonore admired the dark grave eyes and the delicate thin neck. As with most Parisiennes it was when she laughed, showing her white teeth, that she was most charming; and Mademoiselle Yvonne was always showing them. Leonore had observed that the young woman was mark of Damart's attentions, and it amused her to see how different was his manner with Yvonne and with herself. Yvonne he treated with exaggerated gallantry, while Leonore evidently represented to the young man's mind only a *camarade*. Yvonne

had taken instant fancy to Leonore, and always seated herself by her side in class. She was a *piquante* little personage of such bright, birdlike ways, that Leonore could not help liking her.

One day it was evident that Damart had been jilted by Mademoiselle Yvonne for an outrageously pomaded and becurled youth who did the *petits amoureux* of comedy.

"Women are so extraordinary," Damart philosophised, as he and Leonore walked home. "Did you notice Mademoiselle Yvonne to-night? Last week she was charming with me. You see how she has changed — she will hardly speak to me now; all her smiles are for that perfumed *imbécile*!" Damart's indignation was comical.

"Perhaps Yvonne wants merely to tease you; one never can tell!"

"Souvent femme varie,
Fol qui s'y fie,"

Damart quoted. "François Premier was right, was he not, mademoiselle?"

"Is it fair to ask me that?"

"Ah, with you it is different."

"How—different?"

"I mean that you aren't a coquette; in that you don't resemble other women. I have not offended you?"

"Not at all. But do you feel that when I act?"

"I have never seen you in a coquette's part."

"But our scene from *Lucrèce Borgia*? In that I simulate love to gain my ends."

"Yes, but it is *all* pretence; you do not mean any of it."

"And you think a coquette always means some of it?"

"Of course, a coquette does! In love affairs one is always sincere for the moment."

The conversation lingered in Leonore's mind. It piqued her that Damart should remain sentimentally unmoved by her personality, and should question the woman in her. Her manner, in consequence, changed towards him; she began to practise upon him the arts in which he declared her lacking.

One night—a deep, blue night with a round moon high in heaven—Leonore and Damart, crossing the *Parvis de Notre-Dame*, paused to gaze up at the mighty façade of the cathedral before them.

"I never before noticed how beautiful it is," was Damart's comment.

"Never noticed Notre-Dame before?"

"Never; yet I have passed it often enough, too, for I used to be *interne* here at the Hôtel-Dieu. Why, it wouldn't come into my head to go ten steps to look at a building. You Americans are so enthusiastic!"

"Are *you* never enthusiastic?" Leonore smiled.

They wandered to the South Portal. The quay was deserted, silent save for the far-off echoing footsteps, perhaps, of some Endymion hurrying to

his Luna in the Latin Quarter. The cathedral seemed a symbol of solitude—

“Silent and gray as forest-leaguered cliff
Left inland by the Ocean’s slow retreat.”

They gazed mutely at the massive pile on which six hundred centuries had set a hallowing seal.

Presently Damart put his arm round Leonore’s waist and drew her to him.

Their kiss expressed life’s poetry, the moonlight wonder of the night, the passion of unthinking youth.

CHAPTER V

LA VIE DE BOHÊME

LEONORE found the Comtesse des Mazures waiting up for her with a face of rebuke. The Countess had never ceased to deplore her *pensionnaire's* independent habits, and nothing Leonore might say would persuade her to entrust the latchkey to her.

"Ah, it is you at last, mademoiselle!" she said. "I have been much troubled about you—it is after midnight!"

"The Cours was later than usual," Leonore replied; and bidding the Countess good-night, she passed into her bedroom. She trembled still under the stress of her emotions. But the other followed her, saying:

"You did not come home in a cab—I was listening; it is most imprudent to be alone on the streets at such hours."

"I was not alone," Leonore returned with some impatience. "After the Cours Monsieur Damart and I went for a walk; and he accompanied me to the door."

"But, mademoiselle, do you know that these are

things not permissible in France? A young lady cannot allow herself to go about with men at midnight!"

Leonore controlled herself with an effort.

"Madame," she said, "I am very tired. I beg that you will discuss this another time."

When the Countess left her, murmuring some remark about new-world standards of propriety, Leonore, with a sigh of relief, turned to the window and stood gazing out musingly on the moonlit waters of the Seine. She knew that she had committed, that evening, a grave imprudence with Louis Damart. The moral code in the theatrical world wherein she moved was a lax one, and from this world so far had she proudly held herself aloof. There was a dignity about Leonore which discouraged intimacies, and no one used to her the familiar "thou" current among comrades. Damart, like the others, had felt this; and it was not until she had encouraged him by her coquetries that he had presumed upon their relations of mere friend. Leonore regretted now the pique that had caused her to indulge in these arts with Damart; for she prized him as a comrade. She had been moved by the beauty of the moonlit night, by the poetry of the occasion, and had abandoned herself to what was only a moment's feeling, in permitting the young man's kiss; she did not love him.

At bottom Leonore recognised in herself a capacity

for strong, perhaps even tragic, loving. The sense of this came to her at times like lightning flashes of the heart, whereby abeyant, only half-understood sides of herself were illumined. It was from this hidden depth of her nature that she drew her artist power, her ability to express herself through the passionate classic characters she admired; for with Leonore acting was spontaneous, the instinctive product of imagination and feeling. It was for some worthy destiny, she said to herself, that her emotions should wait; and she could look only with contempt on the vulgar amours, the petty *liaisons* of the Cours Bassot. She had cheapened herself in Louis Damart's eyes by a moment of sentimental abandon, and she determined to reinstate herself in his respect; she would make it clear that she did not regard him in the light of lover.

Leonore did not again see Damart for several days, for he came only to the bi-weekly class-nights. In the interim Leonore's impatience caused her to take to her pen, but, having written a letter, she tore it up instead of sending it to Damart. He might, she reflected, only regard the note as a coquette's artifice. No; explanations had best wait until they met, and then she trusted herself that she would make her attitude towards him sufficiently obvious.

Quite contrary to Leonore's expectations, the meeting with Damart was without awkwardness; and there seemed no need for explanations between them. Evidently Damart had not misunderstood her

conceding mood of the previous evening ; his cordial greeting, as she entered the class room, was expressive only of *camaraderie* — there was no trace of the exaggerated gallantry which had marked his lover's feelings for Mademoiselle Yvonne. Leonore was persuaded that she had taken the sentimental episode too seriously. Nevertheless, when the Cours was over, to avoid Damart, she took a cab home, instead of walking, as was her custom, when the weather permitted.

Except for these class contacts, Leonore continued to see nothing of Damart, until one day, after a *matinée* performance at a Charity Bazaar, where Paul Mounet's class had figured on the programme. She had left the Trocadero, and was turning from the Rue de Lubeck into the Avenue d'Iena, when the young man overtook her. Together they walked on to the Trocadero gardens. Their *Lucrèce Borgia* scene had gone off well, and Leonore, thinking only of her interpretation of Lucrèce, said with some triumph : "You see, I can act love-scenes, after all !"

"Are you always acting in love-scenes?" Damart asked significantly. "Aren't you sometimes in earnest?"

"No, I don't know that I am ever very much in earnest—in love-scenes," she said indifferently ; and she returned to the subject of the performance.

"Yet that night at Notre-Dame?"

"Monsieur Damart," Leonore said quickly, "do not let there be any misunderstanding between us.

Forget that night ; or pretend that we were rehearsing our scene. Let us remain comrades."

"Very well, mademoiselle, if you wish it," Damart returned with a smiling readiness that displeased Leonore, while it relieved her mind.

They took one of the river boats back to the Cité, and on the way Damart said :

"Mademoiselle, since we are comrades again, will you not come *en camarade* to a mess-room dinner at my hospital? One of our *internes* has just taken his doctorate, and he is going 'to offer us the champagne,' as the expression is. My friends want me to act, and I should like to give our scene from *Lucrèce Borgia*."

Damart's invitation tempted Leonore. She had had little amusement since coming to Paris ; and, besides, she felt a curiosity to see so characteristic a side of student life.

"But would I be the only woman there?"

"Oh, have no fear on that score, mademoiselle," he answered. "A number of my friends will bring their *femmes*. You may rest assured that you will be treated *en princesse*. My comrades have heard of your talent, and will be delighted if you consent to act for them. I promise, when you make your *début*, that our whole *Salle de Garde* will come to applaud."

"In that case," Leonore smiled, "I certainly must accept. One wants to be sure some one will applaud one's *début*—and a whole *Salle de Garde*!"

When Leonore announced to the Comtesse des Mazures that she intended that evening dining with the *Salle de Garde* of the Necker Hospital, she almost laughed outright, so eloquent with horror was the lady's face.

"But surely mademoiselle jests!" the Countess cried.

"By no means, dear madame. There is a *fête* at the Necker, and Monsieur Damart and myself are to act a scene from Victor Hugo."

"Have you, then, no regard for your reputation?"

Leonore shrugged her shoulders.

"You forget that I am an actress. How can I observe these nice points of propriety you insist upon? I shall soon have to appear in public places; and why not, therefore, act for Monsieur Damart's friends?"

The Countess argued with Leonore in vain. Self-willed and independent by nature, Leonore Redway had chafed always under authority. It was this spirit in her *protégée* which Mrs Burton had resented. Though initiated into some sides of French life, Leonore, like many other American girl-students abroad, did not realise the dangers she ran in conducting herself according to the standards of her own land. She felt only an increasing sense of vexation over the Countess's remonstrances, and was even led to make caustic rejoinders. It was the inevitable clash of bohemia and centuries of tradition.

The Countess, the pink of impatience on her cheek, protested that as her mother's friend, and an

older woman, she had the right to forbid her going to the dinner; and on Leonore haughtily holding to her freedom from anybody's control, the other exclaimed:

"You are in my home, mademoiselle, and I must insist on you respecting it!"

"If you think, madame, that my conduct is such as to bring discredit on your home, my duty is to leave it!"

And the discussion ended by Leonore telling the Countess that she would find other lodging the end of the week.

And, while still under the influence of pride, Leonore, during the afternoon, engaged a *logement* at a small private hotel on the Quai des Grands Augustins.

Leonore now resolved on keeping her word to Damart, despite some misgivings about the dinner. Damart, she told herself, had pledged her his comradeship, and that she ought to repose confidence in him.

Damart's hospital, the Necker, was one of the largest and oldest of the great Paris hospitals. The *Salle de Garde* of the medical students was in a wing overlooking the outer courtyard, and was reached by a flight of dirty spiral stairs. Five rooms opened from a long dark hall. One was the kitchen leading into the mess-room. Opposite was the large library, cheerfully decorated with death-heads and huge jars

containing things Leonore did not care to enquire about. In honour of the occasion the table, or rather tables—for two were set at right angles to economise space—had been set in the library. Praiseworthy attempts had been made to decorate the room. White ribbons were tied to the chairs reserved for the ladies; the gas-jets were also beribboned; and a large plaster bust of Linné looked down from a bookcase with a bright red necktie round his throat and a velvet *béret*, ornamented with the arms of the University of Paris, set rakishly on his venerable head. Of guests and *internes*, there were some twenty - five. The women, Leonore noticed, were decidedly dubious-looking; and she began to suspect that, when Damart remarked that many of his friends would bring their *femmes*, he had used that word in a special sense. She had nevertheless to admit that she was treated with the greatest consideration. The hero of the occasion, the new "Doctor of Medicine," made quite a point of thanking her for the honour she did him and his companions by coming to their banquet.

To her surprise Leonore saw among the guests her comrade from Mounet's class, little Mademoiselle Yvonne, who made her entrance in the company of Damart's successor in Yvonne's graces, the becurled *jeune premier*.

"Ah yes," Damart told Leonore, "I invited mademoiselle and her friend; I do not want her to think that I bear her a grudge."

Such magnanimity seemed natural, somehow, to Louis Damart.

The signal was given to be seated ; and this occasioned much excitement. The only positive rule was that the ladies must have the chairs tied with white ribbons ; and as there were more such chairs than ladies, the seating would have seemed easy ; nevertheless it caused an inordinate amount of discussion.

Leonore was placed between Damart and a young *interne* from the Laennec Hospital. Facing her was a young woman addressed as "Mademoiselle Flore," and who, it seemed, was a model, and had posed for Beauchamps' famous Phryne at the Luxembourg. Next to Mademoiselle Flore was the guest, or rather "host," of honour, the newly-fledged "Doctor of Medicine." It had been explained to the model that Leonore was a *grande artiste*.

"So mademoiselle is *tragédienne*?" she cried rapturously. "How delightful ! I adore tragedy ; it gives me ideas."

Leonore wondered what kind of ideas tragedy gave her.

"And Paul Mounet," Mademoiselle Flore continued, "is your teacher ? He is *épatant* ! But so *triste* and austere. You know, he used to come to Beauchamps' studio. Once he recited a poem about an old knight, or somebody, who cut off somebody's head, and threw the pieces into the sea from the top of a tower. It was *épatant* ! Are you not terribly afraid of him ?"

"Why, no," answered Leonore, amused; "he is very kind. We are all devoted to Monsieur Mounet—he is not terrible at all."

"Ah, *vraiment*? That is *épatant*!"

Everything appeared to *épater* Mademoiselle Flore, who, turning to the new Doctor of Medicine, engaged him in a lively flirtation.

Oysters, in the meantime, had been brought in—curious, coppery *Marennnes vertes* the French are so fond of—dozens and dozens of them, piled on huge trays set in the centre of the table, whence they were handed round—a performance not calculated to improve the neatness of the coarse tablecloth. Wine was provided in great abundance, ten or fifteen bottles of red and of white; and everybody helped everybody with much show of formality.

"Let me fill up your glass, madame," Leonore's companion, Monsieur Renaud, said to her; "it is only a little wine of the country, but really not at all bad."

After oysters came *goujons* from the Seine, French first cousins to Richmond whitebait. Bottles were emptied and replaced by fresh ones, also quickly emptied; and all without apparent effect. Truly, it was but "a little wine of the country," just strong enough to save a Frenchman's dignity in allowing him to dilute it with water.

A Frenchman dines with gusto, but, after all, his talent is talking; and Leonore thought that never before had she heard anything to equal the rattle which the company kept up. On the other

side of the table, within earshot, sat a youth who boasted one of the wonderful, hideous, fascinating French beards of bohemia. He was telling unending anecdotes about characters of his native town in central France. One concerned a local poet, a shoemaker, very proud of his afflatus, and ever ready to discourse literature with his customers. A University student, back for his holidays, took some verses of his own to the old man for criticism, and by so doing greatly flattered him. Among these was a poem of Victor Hugo's, which the student was sure the shoemaker had never seen. It was the Hugo poem, one of the most beautiful of the *Orientales*, that the shoemaker criticised severely. He found rhymes weak, certain inversions unnecessary, the images obscure, "And now, *messieurs et mesdames*," the speaker concluded, "I shall read Victor Hugo's poem as amended by the village shoemaker; for"—and he swelled with pride—"it was I who played the joke!"

Damart and another *interne* were deep in a discussion regarding the discovery of the intermaxillary bone by Goethe. Leonore feared they would fall to blows, so heated the argument became; but in the height of his vehemence, Damart struck his head, crying, "Stupid that I am! This is a trap to get me excited!" Sobering down, he turned to Leonore: "Mademoiselle, I am a poor host. In my love of debate I have forgot my duties. Are you being well cared for?"

Leonore assured him that she was receiving every attention.

"It is dull now," he continued apologetically, "but have patience; the company will wake up!"

Leonore told herself that she had no wish for any greater exhibition of spirits. Already the other end of the table was in an uproar. A quarrel had arisen between a young woman, to whom had fallen the honour of mixing the salad-dressing, and one of the other guests, who maintained that the mustard was being administered with too liberal a hand. The altercation was mischievously encouraged by their neighbours, and resulted in the young woman dashing the contents of the mustard-pot in the salad-bowl. General intervention caused peace to be re-established. Leonore did not relish the incident. Feeling the incongruity of her presence among the revellers, she confined her attention to her quiet neighbour, Monsieur Renaud, who had lived some years in England, and was an agreeable talker.

With the removal of the meat, champagne, a sickeningly-sweet brand such as the French favour, came on, together with coffee, *rhum* and *prunellière*. The manners of the table were still more boisterous after this; and Leonore, who had already repented her coming to the banquet, nervously welcomed the announcement that the performance was now to take place.

Damart headed the programme with *The Municipal Guards*, into the execution of which he put much

humour and vim. The chorus was joined in by the whole board, and was quite effective as far as volume of sound went. One of the *internes* then played a violin solo. More songs followed, some of a scarce fastidious order. Mademoiselle Flore had studio tales to tell; and on being encored, sang a ballad about a starving mother, thereby displaying a wider range of talents than one had believed her capable. Monsieur Renaud and a companion had disappeared, and came back cleverly disguised as beggars, and with realistic gestures, probably learned from some poor hospital sufferer, whined out mendicant songs.

According to French custom the most important number of the programme—the scene from *Lucrèce Borgia*—was reserved for the last. Leonore, who was quite out of humour for acting before such a company, wished that she might escape; besides, the smoke-heavy atmosphere of the room and the noisy mirth had given her a headache, incapacitating her from reciting well. But to her pleadings that the scene might be omitted, there was such general protest Leonore perforce yielded, and took her place beside Damart at the end of the room, which was arranged as stage.

On beginning the scene, a mistake on her companion's part put Leonore out; and in trying to correct herself, she committed a gross blunder in her French. The error caused a laugh from Mademoiselle Flore, who in an audible whisper said something to her neighbour about *l'Américaine*.

Leonore heard, and her annoyance gave her needed command of herself. The scene continued smoothly after that; and when the actors had finished the company enthusiastically expressed their pleasure by a *triple ban*, and clamoured for more champagne in which to drink the health of "Madame" Redway.

The toast drunk, the company rose from their seats. Tables and chairs were cleared from the floor, and dancing began.

Leonore took advantage of these preparations to effect her retreat. Finding Damart, she asked him to call a cab for her.

"But, mademoiselle," he remonstrated, "the dancing has just started up. My companions will be wounded at your leaving. It is still early. I cannot let you go without first being honoured with a waltz."

"On the contrary, it is long after midnight," she answered; "and I am too tired to dance."

She made a movement to depart the room, but Damart laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"Only one waltz, mademoiselle," he entreated ardently. "You surely cannot deny me that!"

"I am sorry, monsieur," she returned, coolly withdrawing from his hold, "but I must ask you to summon a cab for me—I cannot stay longer."

"Very well, then, since you insist," he answered. "You will find your wraps in here." And he opened the door into a small room adjoining the library.

Damart waited with her mantle, while Leonore hastily put on her hat at a mirror.

She caught sight of his wine-flushed face reflected in the glass; and her heart beat nervously at the chagrined expression it wore. Damart evidently had not expected that she would remain proof against the seductions of the evening's entertainment. Leonore was already painfully aware how gravely she had compromised herself by coming to the dinner—the character of the other female guests sufficed to make that plain. She could no longer doubt what was the real nature of Damart's attitude towards her. His assurances of comradeship were merely a ruse. He had deemed her coldness of the previous week the allurements of coquetry. Her presence at the hospital had been construed by him as her capitulation—the end to the comedy that had taken place between them.

"My mantle, please," she said, stretching out her hand.

"Permit me, mademoiselle"; and Damart threw it about her shoulders.

As he did so he caught her to his breast, and, holding her prisoner, began pouring out protestations of love.

Leonore struggled to free herself, outrage giving her strength, while she tried to drown his words with reproaches. His breath was warm against her cheek; she felt stifled by physical pain.

She half wrested herself from him, saying:

"You hurt me. Coward to hurt a woman—let me go!"

"Then go!" he returned; and with a rough gesture released her.

Catching her mantle about her, Leonore found the exit to the hall, and, groping her way down the winding stairs, gained the hospital entrance.

There was a cab-stand at the corner of the street, with a solitary vehicle in waiting. Towards this she hastened, and had just given the drowsy coachman the address, when Damart overtook her.

"Mademoiselle," he cried hurriedly, "I beg you to listen to me."

Leonore, ignoring him, entered the cab and would have closed the door, but he took hold of it.

"One minute, mademoiselle," he implored. "You must not go without hearing me. I was excited—it was the wine I drank. We all forget ourselves."

"Gentlemen do not," Leonore cuttingly returned. "Coachman, Isle-Saint-Louis."

"Mademoiselle, I entreat you to listen to me——"

Leonore impatiently interrupted his apologies.

"It is useless to say anything to me, monsieur. You have been ignoble enough to try to trick me. You deceived me about the entertainment to which you invited me; you deceived me regarding the character of your guests. I did not understand that it was to be a revel of students with their mistresses to which I was bidden! You deceived me, monsieur, and you did it deliberately. You hoped that I too would forget myself, and that you might take advan-

tage of your guest. That may be French gallantry—in America it has another, less flattering, name!”

Damart reddened at her speech; and he said brutally:

“You coin phrases, mademoiselle! I did not deceive you—you deceived yourself. You have been acting the part of a coquette. If I have offended, it is your own fault; you played with me—drew me on.”

She gave him such an indignant look that, in a changed voice, he stammered:

“I admire you, mademoiselle. I thought——”

“You thought what was false, then. But it can make no difference—since we shall not meet again.”

And, signalling the coachman to start, Leonore drew back into her seat.

An early dawn was drearily whitening the city horizons as the cab, crossing the Pont d l’Archevêché, turned in the direction of the Ile-Saint-Louis. On the left, rising out of the lingering darkness, the cathedral, its towers, choir and transept massed together, resembled a formless apocalyptic monster with wings outstretched for flight. In the lifeless light of the grey-skied morn the weather-stained old houses of the Isle looked dull and shabby.

Leonore had no need to ring the great front door of the apartment house. Early as it was, day already had begun for the toilers of Paris. She mounted to the fifth floor, inhabited by the Countess, with slow,

leaden steps; but more than through fatigue was she borne down by sense of physical soil. On going forth the previous evening the Comtesse des Mazures, contrary to her custom, had, without comment, extended the coveted latchkey to her *pensionnaire*; so Leonore, admitting herself to the apartment, was able to seek her room unobserved. There, hastily disrobing, she flung herself on her couch and soon fell asleep—the all-obliterating, numbing sleep of nervous exhaustion.

It was near midday when, unrefreshed by slumber, Leonore awoke.

On entering the dining-room she found her coffee waiting for her; but the Comtesse des Mazures did not, as usual, appear to greet her good morning. Leonore, as she took up her napkin, discovered a note lying on the plate. She broke the seal and glanced at the few lines penned in the Countess's delicate handwriting. Her lips tightened as she read. The Countess, in wording of great politeness, informed Leonore that since she found her stay so uncongenial she need not feel obliged to remain until the end of the week. The suggestion was painful to the writer (in view of her friendship for her *pensionnaire's* mother), but it was actuated by the belief that to find new lodgings without delay was what Leonore would herself prefer.

It was plain that the Countess thought the worst of the previous night's follies.

With brows darkly drawn, Leonore sat staring at the letter in her hand. Her pride was broken ; the crude assurance of her youth had collapsed. Never had she so yearned as at that moment for maternal consolation and sympathy. She had arisen determined to throw herself upon the kindness of the aged Countess, acknowledge her mistake, and beg forgiveness for the rude speeches she had made.

Had she not, she asked herself, suffered enough humiliation for her headstrong act in going to the hospital dinner, without this added insult ?

She enquired of the *bonne* if her mistress was at home.

Yes, Madame la Comtesse was in her room ; should she tell her that mademoiselle desired to speak with her ?

Leonore hesitated, struggling with her pride and her penitence ; then she shook her head.

"No ; do not disturb her," she answered.

Of what avail to see the Countess ? Could she convince her of her innocence by any words ? No, the Comtesse des Mazures was a woman—and women, were they ever generous with each other ? She would never believe the truth !

Going to her room, Leonore packed her belongings, and enclosed in an envelope some banknotes for the Countess. Then, bidding the *bonne* call a cab, she drove to the little furnished hotel where she had engaged rooms for the following week.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE CONSERVATOIRE

HALF a year had passed since Leonore left the Comtesse des Mazures' care to take lodgings on the Quai des Grands-Augustins. Autumn had returned to sadden Paris with drear skies and nipping winds. Leonore, from her high, balconied windows, could see the yellow leaves whirling in heaps along the half-deserted quays, where pedestrians, muffled in great-coats, would slacken their hurried pace to glance at the title of some old volume in the book-stalls lining the parapets. She could watch, too, the slim leaden coil of the Seine, with its grey, arched bridges, and moored sloops, their masts and rigging etched delicately against the saffron west. On her left were the long roofs of the Louvre, sombre-toned under the dull sky. To the right rose the neutral-tinted mass of Notre-Dame, often a vague blur in the moist, sunless weather, which made Paris look like an *aquarelle* done in violet washes.

Leonore had finished her studies at the Cours Bassot, and had been admitted to the Conservatory. She had entered the class of Paul Mounet, her

professor at the Cours Bassot, so there was no change of methods to retard her progress ; and she advanced rapidly, spurred by her new surroundings and the spirit of emulation that animates the great State School of Acting.

She did not form any intimacies with her classmates. The life at the Conservatory was little more than a repetition of that at the Cours Bassot : there was the same pose among pupils, much gossip and envy of each other, intrigue and love-making, but withal some real *camaraderie*. Leonore felt her spirit rise above all this ; the voice of art called to her from grave heights, and she vowed to herself that she would give ear to its renunciatory bidding. She knew that there were laws of life which she must not break if she desired to attain her artistic goals ; the words of the Montmartre priest came back to her as warning.

The humiliating experience with Louis Damart had left Leonore thoughtful. She saw that the moral atmosphere in which she lived was insidious, and might easily dwarf her ideals. It was not alone peril to character : she recognised that Paris menaced her artistic capacities.

Leonore was familiar enough with theatrical life to infer that virtue had little place there ; and that the genius of great actresses seemed in no wise decreased or limited by that fact ; that in abandoning themselves to the senses many of these actresses seemed to awaken to fullest growth. But the

American girl also remembered that between these artists and herself lay difference of inherited ideas. She could not escape the claim upon character and conscience of the morals of her own land ; and her strongest reserves, she felt, would be ability to hold herself above the world in which she dwelt. Art for her must be consecration, sacrifice, single-hearted devotion to work that was rigorous. She must turn the vitalities of youth into artistic channels. Let her but yield to temptation (and Leonore understood what possibility for evil was hers), and her inspiration would vanish ; she would lose the anointment of talent. It was with these reflections that Leonore endeavoured to safeguard herself from the dangers round her.

One day—it was the first *cours* after New Year's—the assembled class was waiting for Monsieur Mounet, who was tardy.

There was a great buzz of conversation ; for the students were telling each other how they spent the holidays, and what plans they had formed for the next twelvemonth.

Leonore had studied a new scene—it was one of the acts of Racine's *Andromaque*, and she was not satisfied with her preparation : she told herself that her professor would be displeased with her work.

When Paul Mounet entered the class-room, he was not alone. His companion was ill-shaped and short ; he seemed almost deformed by the side of the large, superbly-proportioned Mounet. Immediately on the

stranger's entrance Leonore thought she must have seen him before. She had seen him ; yes — but where? It was not until he had taken a seat next to Monsieur Mounet behind the professor's table and leaned forward in the glow of the chandelier, that Leonore recognised in the visitor the elder of the men who had lunched at a neighbouring corner in the "Abbaye de Thélème."

A pupil was called upon to recite a long scene from Corneille's *Cid*, and Leonore had ample opportunity to study the face of Paul Mounet's companion. One of the class whispered: "It is the *chansonnier* Fidus." Leonore had often heard of the famous Montmartre *chansonnier* whose *cabaret* of the "Seven Capital Sins" was the most literary of the *cabarets* of the *Butte*. Tales were current about the sombre character of the man, and how, before his rise to fame, he had been saved from starvation by young René Bouchard, son of the millionaire *restaurateur*. Fidus was jealous of the reputation of his *cabaret*, and an appearance on his boards carried with it considerable prestige. Leonore regarded him with absorption.

Fidus's face was a curious one ; interesting for its contradictory, even clashing lines. Ideality sat in the broad forehead, and the melancholy, deep eyes showed themselves capable of piercing flashes. But the lower half of the face, why did it repel her? The chin was weak, and the unusually large mouth expressed sensuality and cruel tastes rather

than generosity and intelligence. Was the excessive mobility of the mouth weakness, or was it merely a typic actor's mouth? At times, Leonore noticed that the mouth closed tightly, and then the face took on an air of forceful, not ignoble determination.

With undisguised indifference Fidus sat listening to the heroic verses of Corneille spouted by a confident young tragedian. His large, restless eyes scanned nervously the faces in the room, and it seemed to Leonore that they dwelt on her with recognition. Once he turned and whispered something to Paul Mounet; and the professor sent a glance in her direction. Leonore thought, "They are talking about me!"

When the scene from the *Cid* was over, Paul Mounet called Leonore forward.

"My scene from *Andromaque*?" Leonore asked.

"No, no," was the answer; "I want you to give us *Les Erinnyes* again. I wish you, mademoiselle, to forget the months of drudgery. Let yourself go in the scene; it is one of the few wherein that is allowable. Show us of what you are capable."

The first words of Cassandra—

"*Ye Gods! Ye Gods! My cup is full, and my day hath come!*"

Leonore uttered in a whisper. Her voice appeared hoarse with the horror of Cassandra's prophetic vision.

Then with a gesture she seemed to awaken as from a trance. From the chorus the priestess

demands whither her steps have led her; and the reply, "Under the royal roof of Agamemnon," calls forth Cassandra's terrible execration—

*"O Dwelling, detested of Gods and of men!
Into what blood-stained cavern, and accursed,
Apollo, hast thou cast me?"*

Thrilled by the text and the pictures her imagination conjured up, Leonore came near losing, from emotion, her self-control in the sublime passage where Cassandra evokes the Furies—"monsters that revel in the cries of the dying, which pale, hollow-eyed, lick eternally fresh blood-stains of past crime, and scent the gore of crimes yet to be," and announces the murder of Agamemnon, "King of Kings, Warrior victorious, Destroyer of cities." In these lines Leonore's voice well-nigh failed her; but during the short response of the chorus she achieved new mastery of herself. She knew that she must save her voice for the end. She recited the following speech, therefore, in low tones, slowly, enunciating with care, and taking deep breaths. The passage possesses a rare beauty. Cassandra gives back to her divine lover, Apollo, the insignia of her priesthood, saying with resigned pathos:

*"Now let me be bound, let a single blow fell me;
And let me sleep at last."*

This economy of voice was just what perfect art demanded; and at the tragically intense whispered words the stranger cried out, "Bravo! Bravo!"

Leonore felt that she had triumphed.

As she returned to her seat Paul Mounet bade her wait after the *Cours*.

"I told Monsieur," he said, when, the class over, he introduced Leonore to his companion, "that I had in my class an American *tragédienne* who is becoming a French *tragédienne*. Monsieur is a great lover of the theatre. You pleased me with your scene, but, *ma petite!* you must be careful; you should let yourself go, but not lose yourself in your part. That is bad art, and—it is dangerous!"

"I hardly think that that is mademoiselle's danger," the *chansonnier* remarked. "On the contrary, I think that she wonderfully keeps her head. I compliment you, mademoiselle," he continued, turning to her with a bow that had perhaps a touch of malice, "on the capital use you made of a threatened breakdown. I believed your voice had quite fagged, and feared that you would be unable to finish."

Leonore felt a swell of vexation: she had flattered herself that her trick escaped detection.

At the Conservatory entrance Paul Mounet parted with Leonore and Fidus, and the two walked on together towards the boulevards, the *chansonnier* questioning his companion about her work. His manner was curiously like that of a prosecuting attorney. He spoke in concise phrases, and, while she answered, fixed her with a look that seemed to compel truth. He would fall into fits of silence,

ignoring her, evidently turning a thought over in his head.

They had reached the Boulevard Poissonnière.

"If you can spare me a few moments I should like to talk with you about a poem of mine," he said abruptly.

They passed on towards the Porte Saint-Denis. Here the Grands Boulevards are at their widest—in front of the Gymnase Theatre and Marguery's terraced, palm-embowered restaurant. Trees, several rows deep, adorn this part of the boulevard; and, though by no means elegant, it is one of the gayest and busiest sections of the great series of streets running from the Madeleine to the Bastille. Leonore experienced a certain pride as she walked along the crowded thoroughfare; she was with a Parisian celebrity whom many turned to look after, for Fidus's bent stature, leonine head and other personal peculiarities made him easy to identify.

"My poem," he began, "is called *The Red Sphinx*; it is a poem in dialogue—a dialogue between the Poet and Sphinx, the Red Sphinx of Anarchy. The poet has visions of the various abuses of Society, and is asked what these mean by the monster, who appears always in a menacing attitude." Slow, leaden drops of rain began falling, but, oblivious, he continued: "The poem would lose half its effect if not recited in dialogue. Though without action, it is dramatic." He paused, and gave her a keen glance. "Do I interest you?"

"Yes, very much," Leonore said. "Please continue."

"Let us go into a *café*, then," he answered, "where we shall be sheltered while we talk."

He drew Leonore towards the *café* nearest at hand. It was a mean wine-shop where plasterers in loose, white velveteens stood before the *zinc*; the *marchand-de-vin*, in shirt sleeves, was serving out doubtful-looking liqueurs. The inevitable tortoise-shell grimalkin lay comfortable, coiled on madame's knitting among the array of *carafes*; and that good lady—a generous-bosomed matron—was energetically polishing the brass coffee-urn. Over all brooded the smell of absinthe and chicory steam.

Fidus, pushing open the glazed door, ushered Leonore into the rear-room. They seated themselves on the leather-cushioned *banquette* behind one of the half-dozen tables, while the *marchand-de-vin* asked what monsieur and madame desired.

"*Deux vertes!*" was Fidus's reply, and again he took up the subject of *The Red Sphinx*. He told Leonore that he had written the poem some years before, but that he had never produced it because he had not found a suitable interpreter.

"You have perhaps heard," he said, "that I never have women appear at my *cabaret*? I have the 'Seven Deadly Sins'—that suffices! To produce my poem it will be necessary to break this rule. I consider you a serious artist, something that can be said of few actresses to-day; and your performance

of Cassandra persuades me that you could be my Red Sphinx. Will you accept?"

He busied himself preparing the drinks that the *marchand-de-vin* brought in to them. Carefully, drop by drop, he poured water over the absinthe spoons that held the little cubes of sugar, and as it trickled down into the glass the liquor took a greenish hue and became cloudy.

Fascinated, forgetful of the cavalier fashion in which he treated her, Leonore watched Fidus. After all, the eyes were kind, even though the mouth was cruel. There were lines of suffering in the face that stirred her sympathy.

Now the sugar was properly melted by the steady drip of the water. Fidus took off the perforated spoon, and holding the *carafe* high up at arm's length, slowly poured the water until the glasses were almost full; then a turn of the wrist brimmed the glasses, and the absinthe was ready.

"We'll drink to *The Red Sphinx!*" he said. "You accept my offer, mademoiselle?"

"If you think that I shall be able——"

"No phrases, I beg of you," was the rough retort. "I hate phrases. It is understood, then, that you are to create *The Red Sphinx* at my *cabaret*. I drink to *The Red Sphinx!*" And he emptied his glass. "Give me your address. I shall send you the poem to-night; read it, and tell me your opinion when we meet. You have never been to my *cabaret*?"

"Never."

"You'll see strange things there. Deadly Sins, Masks of Hypocrisy, Sphinxes—all my work. You know, I am a wood-carver, and a painter, and a *chansonnier*, and an actor, and a poet. I am almost a genius. Can you come the day after to-morrow?—at about eleven? You shall inspect my museum, talk over the poem with me, and then we shall go to lunch at the 'Abbaye de Thélème,' where I first saw you."

"You recognised me, then?"

"Certainly. So I shall expect you Friday."

And, without waiting for an answer, he left her.

CHAPTER VII

THE *CABARET* OF THE "SEVEN CAPITAL SINS"

IT was with considerable curiosity that Leonore went to keep her appointment with Fidus. The poem, *The Red Sphinx*, had impressed her deeply. Immediately she had seen its dramatic possibilities, and she understood why, after witnessing her performance of Cassandra in the *Erinnyes*, Fidus had chosen her to appear in the poem. The Red Sphinx of the verses was, like Cassandra, a prophetess of calamity, of horrors and bloodshed; and Leonore felt that the qualities which brought her success in one rôle would serve her in the other. She had memorised the whole poem, the speeches of the poet as well as those of the Sphinx; and she was eager to see whether her conception of the Sphinx would satisfy the author. Leonore regarded the *chansonnier's* offer as her opportunity; this creation at the *cabaret* of Fidus might prove the first step towards fame. Paul Mounet had counselled her to accept the offer. "It is not," he said, "usual for Conservatory pupils to appear at *cabarets*. I should not want you to appear at any but Fidus's; Fidus is a true artist, and it will

be a beneficial experience ; you can learn much from the man ; he is a master of diction and an able teacher. Accept, by all means."

Fidus's establishment, the *cabaret* of the "Seven Capital Sins," was on the Boulevard Clichy, between the Place Blanche, with its Moulin Rouge, and the Place Pigalle and its famed restaurants, the "Dead Rat" and the "Abbaye de Thélème," rendezvous of Montmartre night-life. There are a half-score of these literary *cabarets* in this district of Paris, some mere catch-penny resorts, maintained by provincial patronage and foreign visitors, others like that of Fidus, the most interesting of them all since the "Chat Noir," their famous prototype, ceased to exist.

Leonore, on her way to the *cabaret*, recalled the first time that she climbed Montmartre to view the outspread city from the platform of the Sacré Cœur Church, and how, after her talk with the priest, she had descended, full of dreams and ambitions, to the Place Pigalle, where, in the restaurant of the "Abbaye de Thélème," she had noticed the *chansonnier* Fidus, the man who now offered her her *début*. It seemed to her that the finger of fate was in it all.

Leonore reached the door of Fidus's *cabaret*. The entrance to the establishment showed no flaming posters. Over the door, wrought of dark wood, was the name :

"CABARET DES SEPT PÉCHÉS CAPITALAUX."

On the panel hung a huge knocker, representing a

bronze dwarf, whose out-thrust tongue was pierced by an "F" to make the handle. On both sides of the portal were high, narrow, diamond-paned windows.

The door was ajar, and Leonore, pushing it wide, found herself in a lobby ornamented with pictures, mostly black-and-white sketches, all in curiously carved frames.

In a high-backed Gothic chair sat Fidus. The cloudy masses of silken black hair, his heavily-cut features, stooped head and shoulders, reminded Leonore, as she caught the picture on entering, of Betruccio in the *Fool's Revenge*. By the *chansonnier's* side stood a young man, in whom Leonore recognised Fidus's companion at the "Abbaye de Thélème" restaurant.

"Mademoiselle is punctual," Fidus said in greeting, as he rose; "I believe that is an American trait. But mademoiselle is American only by birth; her art makes her French, *n'est-ce pas?*" He turned to his companion. "René, I want to present you to my Red Sphinx! Mademoiselle, this is my friend, Monsieur René Bouchard."

The young man stepped forward, bowing with a certain shyness of manner. Leonore felt the strange contrast between the two men. Bouchard was light, slim in build, delicate-featured; he resembled the Versailles Museum portrait of Alfred de Musset—a resemblance enhanced by the high black velvet stock and the general costumes of 1830 he affected.

On Bouchard the dress had a picturesque elegance quite different, Leonore thought, from the same costume slovenly worn by students seen in the Luxembourg Garden on concert days. Bouchard's hands were long and slender, very white, and unadorned by rings. Fidus, on the contrary, had large, rough hands with spatulate nails and heavily-balled thumbs, denoting will-power, tenacity of purpose. On one hand was an old Venetian poison-ring of subtle workmanship. Fidus was seemingly fond of eccentric jewellery: his cravat was clasped by a beryl Medusa's head; his watch-chain was made of genuine scarabs linked with gold lotus-buds.

"You have read my poem, eh?" Fidus brusquely questioned, when Leonore had taken the seat offered her by Bouchard. "Well, what do you think of it?"

"I like it immensely, monsieur," she answered, "I have committed it to memory; but I do not know if I understand the part of the Sphinx as you would wish it interpreted."

"We shall see, we shall see. I am glad that you are enthusiastic; I believe the poem can be made effective. The idea of a Red Sphinx hovering over Paris and threatening to annihilate the city, came to me once when I was ill. I could see the Sacré-Cœur from my bed; and one day, when a thunder-cloud blackened the sky behind the church, I seemed to behold a monstrous figure above the dome. I suppose that I was delirious. At all events, I talked with the Sphinx. And that is how the

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poem originated. If agreeable to you, mademoiselle, we shall rehearse the verses. I leave you for a moment with Monsieur, while I light the lamps. He will show you my pictures."

These were mostly black-and-whites by Fidus himself; with two or three oil-paintings by Bouchard; and several photographs of unpublished studies by Rodin, the only art objects not originals.

It was with manifest pride that Bouchard pointed out the works of his friend, explaining the subjects. There was one series that particularly attracted Leonore's attention. It was named "The Wood-carver's Vision," and it showed an artisan—a wood-carver—perpetually haunted by an ideal face. In his daily life—in the atelier, when taking his meals at the corner wine-shop, at night in his garret, in crowded street and park, everywhere—always, the exquisite vision. The realism of these pencil drawings, the fidelity with which they depicted the every-day habits of a humble artisan in a populous city district, formed a strangely eloquent background for the pursuing face. Now vaguely floating in the shadow of a wall, now peering from the trees along the boulevards, now hovering in the irised spray of public fountains, now under the dark arch of a bridge, luminous, beseeching, its beauty spoke of things transcendent, not of earth.

"Yes," Bouchard said, "that is my friend's masterpiece! It was this series which first made him known to the artistic world. He exhibited 'The Wood-

carver's Vision' at the Salon, and it was the sensation of the hour. But Paris is capricious! Fidus did not follow up his success by other work—he was too ill to do any at that time—and he was soon forgotten. The series was purchased by an amateur whose collection came under the hammer shortly after, and I bought it. It was those pictures that made me wish to become an artist; and that was the beginning of our friendship."

They went back into a long, narrow room which served as auditorium. There was only a single gas-jet burning, which cast on walls and ceiling dismal shadows. Round the room there ran a frieze, and Leonore could indistinctly trace the gruesome macabre figures of Holbein's "Dance of Death." Caustic epigrams of Martial had been used as decorative mottoes for the panelled walls, where hung etchings, woodcuts, and Fidus's famous Masks of Hypocrisy.

"Before we sacrifice on the altar of art, you must see, mademoiselle, what supports that art," Fidus remarked. "Turn on more light, René! Now, mademoiselle," Fidus cried mockingly, "behold the Seven Deadly Sins! Are they not alluring—as sins should be?"

Seven large figures, ranged side by side like caryatides, served as supports to the footlights, or rather to the reflectors, their visages fronting the auditorium.

"See," Fidus said, "there they are! Do you

recognise what each one is? The first there: that is Greed. Look! in his eagerness he is devouring his own hand; he has half-crammed it down his maw—ah, base, disgusting Gluttony! And do you know this one? Is she not fair to look upon, mademoiselle? That is Lust! Note her face and the voluptuous bosoms; but below—a sow's body. And there—Murder! All dread that lean-wristed hand which clutches the knife, those groping fingers which close and throttle; all fear him; yet he is the most honest of them all! I would rather meet grim Murder than Envy with her forked tongue!"

As on the portals of Gothic cathedrals one sees, crouching beneath the effigies of saints and angelic host, deformed, hideous beings that designate the temptations trodden underfoot, so, in the representation of the Seven Capital Sins, Fidus had heightened the philosophic meaning of his work by putting under each revolting sin a small sweet figure of a Virtue.

"But come, come," he said, in a changed tone, "we lose valuable time. We must evoke the Red Sphinx who threatens to sweep them all away—Vices and Virtues together."

Over the proscenium was lettered a quotation from *Hamlet*:

"Use every man after his deserts, and who should 'scape whipping?"

As Leonore mounted the platform she noticed the familiar lines, and the *chansonnier*, seeing this, remarked grimly:

"No one escapes whipping here!"

Fidus took his seat in the faintly-lit auditorium, leaving Leonore alone on the stage.

It was from this solemn darkness that there came to Leonore the first lines of the poem. Fidus's voice in conversation was well-modulated and pleasing; when he recited it took a deep and graver tone. His diction was exquisite; every sound was given its full value, yet there was harmonious flow.

Leonore responded to Fidus's admirable declamation, and did her part better than she had believed that she might do. They went through the entire poem together. Fidus was pleased.

"Thank you, mademoiselle," he said, when she had descended from the stage; "you do well. The poem will be a success—you will see!"

The lunch at the "Abbaye de Thélème" passed off agreeably. The three talked of the theatre and of art; Fidus told them of other poems that he had written or had in mind.

When they parted the *chansonnier* said to Leonore:

"We must rehearse the poem once more; that will suffice. I shall announce your *début* and the *première* of *The Red Sphinx* for next week. I shall see that the rest of the programme is worthy of the occasion. It shall be a gala night, mademoiselle!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE RED SPHINX

THE novel feature of a young American actress appearing at Fidus's *cabaret* attracted a brilliant audience the night of Leonore's *début*. Fidus and Leonore both won the approbation of public and critics. The critics pronounced *The Red Sphinx* one of the best productions that had come from the *chansonnier* school of Montmartre. Certain reactionary papers made attacks on the poem, denouncing the author as an enemy of Society, and calling the work a challenge to public opinion, an insult to Church and State. This increased its vogue: for, on the other hand, it was hotly supported by the Radical and Socialist journals.

This noise foretold a long run for the poem. Fidus, to vary the programme, brought out other poems he held in reserve, that Leonore might recite them. All his work had the touch of the *bizarre* which had made his repute as draughtsman and *chansonnier*. His poetic productions admirably suited the talents and temperament of Leonore; and so much the favourite she became with the

patrons of Fidus's establishment—for these Montmartre *cabarets* have their special public—that the *chansonnier* could depend on her as the main feature of his programmes.

Some three weeks after the first performance of *The Red Sphinx* the poet-critic, Catulle Mendes, paid a visit to his friend's *cabaret*. He had always been an admirer of Fidus's art, and his staunch supporter in the literary world.

The *salle* had been emptied of its audience; the footlights lowered; Catulle Mendes, René, and Leonore stood in front of the life-size effigies of the Seven Capital Sins.

"What imagination the man has!" the critic mused. "In what realms of Melancholy and Dream, I wonder, did he encounter these figures? They are horribly realistic, yet unreal. They are unreal, yet we have all seen them in hours of fever or sleepless suffering. I suppose that such strange personifications of Sin fascinate the audiences which come here; but to most they are only grotesque. I doubt that many feel their imaginative beauty. Yes, mademoiselle, their *beauty*," he reiterated, bowing to Leonore, who had protested at the word, "for imagination is always beautiful. The witches of *Macbeth*, Caliban in *The Tempest*, these phantasms of your Shakespeare's art, all have beauty of unearthly uplift; it is Hideousness and Horror transmuted into the sublime through the potency of the imagination. You, mademoiselle, being

American, are, naturally, a Shakespeare enthusiast—like Fidus and myself?”

And the speaker fell to discussing with the *chansonnier*, who had joined the circle, his theory of the Horrible as illustrated in Shakespeare and Racine.

On leaving, Catulle Mendes again complimented Leonore on her recitation.

“Your poses were most effective,” he told her; “it is a pleasure, indeed, to find an artist capable of poetic interpretation like yours. Our friend here has given form to the Spirit of the Century in this monster of prophecy; you have breathed life into the monster, and made of its horror a seizing experience. Mademoiselle, your Sphinx should be a painter’s inspiration.”

“Yes, she is like a picture,” young Bouchard agreed. “In her scarlet mantle, and with that menacing attitude of hers, mademoiselle makes the poem reality. One sees the Sphinx above the marble dome of the Sacré-Cœur, the blood-red shadow that creeps over the city, the background of lightning-riven cloud——” He stopped with a return of his wonted embarrassment.

“And, monsieur, why do *you* not paint that picture?” Catulle Mendes said with a smile. “There is a subject for your Salon canvas, if you will. You had nothing last year, if I remember?”

“Nothing of consequence—some sketches.”

“Ah yes—those sketches; I recall them now. But you owe us something on a large scale—some-

thing more than sketches. They promised: let a Red Sphinx be fulfilment."

A sensitive look flitted across Bouchard's face, unnoted by the critic, who was shaking hands with Leonore.

While Fidus bade his guest good-night at the *cabaret* door, Leonore asked:

"And why, monsieur, do you not paint the picture?"

"It is beyond my powers," he said with a deprecating shrug.

"But you spoke with such enthusiasm just now; you seemed to see the subject so finely!"

"Ah, mademoiselle," he smiled a little sadly, "it was you who inspired my words!"

"Then," she answered, "let me inspire your picture! I am sure that you can paint it."

"You are generous, mademoiselle. You give me courage; but I should fail if I undertook such a theme. All the ideas of my friend are so great; and this poem is his masterpiece. If I tried to make a picture of the Sphinx I should desire it to be worthy of Fidus—and of you, mademoiselle, who make the poem live for the public."

"And I please you so much in the part?" she said, flattered.

"Indeed, yes," he answered. "I have never known Fidus to be more delighted over the creation of one of his poems; it has renewed his enthusiasm for the *cabaret*."

"Paint the picture, monsieur!" Leonore held out her hand winningly. "Come, promise me that you will!"

He hesitated.

"If you would pose?" he ventured, looking his admiration. "You are the Red Sphinx to me. No other woman could represent her."

"But I do not want to represent a Red Sphinx to your eyes, monsieur!" she protested laughingly. "I should prefer to seem a woman."

"I did not mean, mademoiselle——"

"Ah, do not apologise," she returned. "I shall be content to seem a Red Sphinx to you if by appearing so I inspire your picture."

"Then you consent to pose?" he eagerly demanded.

"I fear, monsieur, that my Conservatory work will make that impossible."

"If you mean your preparatory work for Paul Mounet," he said, "I am sure that Fidus would help you. Among my friend's many accomplishments he has a talent for teaching. You should have seen some of the *chansonniers* who recite here when they first came—before Fidus had coached them. Fidus!" he called out gaily, "don't you want mademoiselle for a pupil? I am trying to persuade her to sit for the Red Sphinx, but she fears that it would hinder her work with Mounet."

"Is that all?" Fidus answered. "Then it can be easily arranged, René. Mademoiselle," he continued to Leonore, "it would give me pleasure to assist you."

I suppose that you will scarcely be doing a Suzanne or Toinon—I'm afraid that I couldn't help you in *soubrette* parts. But I can serve you a Phèdre, a Chimène ; for I am all for Tragedy."

While rehearsing the *Sphinx* with Fidus, Leonore had quickly guessed the born dramatic instructor. And she rejoiced at the opportunity which now offered itself, recalling how her professor had urged the advantage of work with Fidus.

She readily accepted the offer.

"Then let us begin the sittings at once," René said joyfully. "You will come to-morrow to the studio?"

Fidus marked Bouchard's unusual enthusiasm, and, in consequence, all the more readily consented to coach Leonore. His young friend had grown discouraged about his work, and Fidus, aware of the strained relations between Bouchard and his family owing to his choice of profession, welcomed any renewal of interest that might lead to the painter's success—success that alone could heal the breach. Besides, the *chansonnier* was satisfied that he had found in Leonore a peculiarly eligible medium through which the soul in his warped body might find its fitting and longed-for utterance.

Until lately Fidus had been obliged through poverty to earn his livelihood, despite his precarious health. It was only after René had sought him out as pupil and friend that he was placed in a position of any ease. René, through advancing the money to open a *cabaret*, had enabled Fidus to realise a

first step towards gratifying hitherto precluded tastes. So far the *chansonnier* had restlessly occupied his leisure with divers arts; but, after all, it was the art of the actor, the theatre and all that pertained to it, which fixed his passion.

Leonore had strangely appealed to Fidus that first day he had seen her, more than a year ago. When his friend, Paul Mounet, told him of the talented American girl in his class, Fidus recalled his and René's speculations at the "Abbaye de Thélème" regarding the nationality and profession of the young woman seated at the neighbouring table; and he wondered if by any chance Mounet's prodigy could be the same person. Often since she had begun reciting at his *cabaret* the *chansonnier* had congratulated himself on his artistic insight. Leonore Redway was destined to greatness on the stage—of this Fidus was convinced; and it was only through a certain reserve of nature that he had refrained from uniting himself more closely with the young actress's interests. That night, Leonore, ambitious to impress so prominent a critic as Catulle Mendes, had recited with unusual mastery; and Fidus was the more persuaded of her extraordinary possibilities.

CHAPTER IX

THE *ATELIER* ON THE PLACE PIGALLE

RENÉ BOUCHARD'S *hôtel* was a veritable museum of Gothic and Mediæval art. The young artist cared little for magnificence and luxury, and it had been to please his parents that he had exchanged his modest *atelier*, installed in his father's Parc Monceau residence, for the splendid private *hôtel*-studio on the Place Pigalle. This *hôtel* formerly had been occupied by the famous painter, Marius-Dupont, who had now left Paris ; and, when not making profit out of millionaire patrons in America and England, lived in an old *château* he had bought on the outskirts of his native Breton village. René's father had taken the *hôtel* on a long lease, determined that if his son was to be artist, he should at least possess the handsomest studio in Paris.

His son's choice of an artistic profession had been a bitter disappointment to Monsieur Bouchard, who had cherished ambitions quite different for his only child, through whom he had indeed hoped to see the Bouchard fortunes attain their acme.

The history of the family—a history extending

over three generations—was remarkable. Ability in a special line, adherence to that speciality, tenacious purpose, thrift, prudent marriages, these were what had, step by step, led the Bouchards from the grandfather's humble position of pastry-cook in a provincial town to that of the present Bouchard Senior, millionaire proprietor of the most famous restaurant in Paris, President of the Syndicate of Restaurateurs, and Knight of the Legion of Honour.

Bouchard Senior was proud of the family's rise in the world, and hoped to see his son still higher in the social scale. He had often told René how his pastry-cook grandfather had benefited by the occasion of some local exposition by preparing a most acceptable—indeed, highly appreciated—repast for a prince of the blood, a son of King Louis Philippe, who had come officially to inaugurate the exposition. Royalty had condescended to enquire how it chanced that such highly-developed culinary skill was buried in the provinces. The shrewd patron of this lucky *chef* took the hint; he married his daughter to his cook, and lent the young couple capital wherewith to open a large restaurant in Paris.

The child of this union—René's father—had come into his inheritance during the last years of the Empire. He determined to have not the largest and most popular restaurant, but the finest and most exclusive in Paris. He chose a wife wisely; with the instincts of the born cook he wedded a

wine cellar. The *dot* that René's mother brought her husband was one of the rarest collections of Burgundies and Bordeaux in France. Good wines counted during the Empire; and it was by virtue of his clarets, his authentic Chambertins and Clos de Vougeots, that the *restaurateur* Bouchard out-distanced all rivals upon setting up his elegant establishment on the Grands-Boulevards, near the Madeleine. By miracle nothing was lost during the terrible Commune: Bouchard, shrewd, cool-headed, managed to turn coats twice just at the right moment. He saved his precious bins by sacrificing a few score bottles of coarse, strong wine to the leaders of the "Reds" when they were in power, and to the "Versillais" some dozen bottles of fairly fine Burgundy, labelled "Chambertin Ier Cru." Now that the glories of the Empire had passed away, and democracy reigned in France, Bouchard's was still the great Parisian restaurant—the restaurant of Russian grand dukes, and of exiled kings, and, of late, the restaurant of kings not exiled, and of those other sovereigns—the new Royalty, the Kings of Commerce.

Content—and well he might be—with his own success in life, Bouchard's ambitions were centred on his son. Finding social recognition for the young man unrealisable through the very fame and name of his restaurant, the old man's dream was immense wealth for his only offspring. Affected by the craze for speculation, which characterised his age,

he planned a restaurant trust, a giant "combine," that was to embrace, not alone the chief restaurants of Paris, but likewise those of London, Vienna, New York, and Monte Carlo, and the Alpine and Riviera resorts.

And his son was set on being an artist!

It was with the utmost bitterness that he had opposed this desire; and it was only at last that, through the good offices of René's mother, he had been won over to grumbling acquiescence. Madame Bouchard argued that neither the head of a great Paris restaurant nor even the head of a world-combine of restaurants would ever receive the *accolade* of Society.

"But an artist," she said—"an artist can arrive at anything. If René becomes a famous painter, like Monsieur Bouguereau or Monsieur Bonnat, he will be officer of the Legion of Honour" (It had always been Bouchard *père's* chagrin that he could never hope for more than the Chevalier's button!); "he will become a Member of the Academy of the Fine Arts; he will paint the likenesses of *grandes dames* and of diplomats—of the President of the Republic, perhaps; he will be bidden to dine at the Elysée, and the great world will open its doors to him! With the money we can give him, René need not drudge or wait for artistic recognition!"

Thus the good *bourgeois* were convinced that their son, with the talents that they never doubted he possessed, and the fortune with which they could

smooth his way to fame, would be in the world of fine arts what Bouchard Senior was in his world. So consent was grudgingly won: the father, relinquishing with a sigh his dream of the world caterer; the mother, confident of the officer's rosette her René would have on his lapel, and the portraits of duchesses and statesmen that her son would paint.

True to their conception of what made an artist's fame, the Bouchards promptly set about securing for René a studio, which they strove to have as expensive as might be. In the furnishings they wisely sought the co-operation of René's friend Fidus.

Fidus was indefatigable. In the pursuit of treasures for the new *atelier*, he scoured Normandy and Brittany, French Flanders, Belgium and Holland, sometimes with René, sometimes alone. From these expeditions rare finds were brought back: huge *armoires*, great four-posted bedsteads, and superbly-carved chests bound with brass, worthy of place in the Musée Cluny; magnificent Flemish hangings, and, gem of all, a sixteenth-century reredos, miracle of wood-carving, which Fidus had unearthed in a small village near Ypres.

Facing on the Place Pigalle, the exterior of the *hôtel* was without pretension—a plain five-windowed façade, three storeys high, and over the top storey, in lieu of roof, the studio of grand dimensions occupying the whole width and depth of the building. A small grass plot was enclosed by an iron railing which, separating the pavement from the house, gav

access to the latter by means of a wrought-iron gate. The door alone relieved the plainness of the façade: it was painstakingly carved by Fidus himself, who had copied the beautiful twelve-panelled design from the Hôtel du Grand Cerf at Grand-Andelys.

The vestibule was royal with tapestry; huge oak chests were ranged against walls from which wood sculptures—stiff, long-limbed Gothic figures—gazed down in the dim gold and rose-toned light of sixteenth-century glass.

The staircase was an artistic caprice: the balusters, removed from an old house in the Marais recently condemned, represented slim, long-tailed apes pursuing each other up the stairs.

On the third floor was the studio. Three sides were of glass; the fourth was hung with the choicest suit of tapestry of seventeenth-century date, depicting the Fall of Troy and the Flight of Æneas and Anchises. A wide fireplace set in this wall was framed by a mantel-piece with two fine lions' heads carved in its black marble; upon it stood a large bronze copy of the Elder Seneca in the Naples Museum flanked by two antique candelabra. Across one end of the room stretched a deep divan, covered with rich Italian silks. Behind it was the famous reredos with its hundreds of tiny figures exquisitely carved, but, alas! sadly damaged by time. High Gothic chairs stood about; and opposite the fireplace a porphyry column supported an antique marble head of surpassing beauty.

It was here, in the studio, that Leonore almost lived for the next few months.

René began painting the picture immediately. Every morning that Leonore did not attend the Conservatory she posed at the *atelier*, and, when the light allowed, work was often continued in the afternoon.

The work with Fidus Leonore found even more useful to her than she anticipated. Not only did it lighten the Conservatory grind, but, through the *chansonnier*, she became familiar with contemporary French poetry.

Fidus read well, and would entertain René and Leonore by the hour with the verse of Léon Dierx, of Mallarmé, of Paul Verlaine and Baudelaire. Besides these poets of hot-house growth, Fidus had a love for Leconte de Lisle: his grim *Raven*—Wandering Jew of birds—the *Heart of Hialmar*, the bloody *Judgment of Komor*, these were his dreadful favourites of that writer. From Baudelaire's *Fleurs de Mal* he culled the deadly night-shade of *Satan's Litany*; from Barbey d'Aurevilly's verse the solemn ode to "The Old Sun"; the *Tropheés* of Heredia provided sundry sonnets curiously carved and adorned with Indian gems. Nor was Victor Hugo, heart-beat of nineteenth-century France, forgot; and from his orchestral poesy Fidus would sometimes choose the soft string melodies of *Les Orientales*, sometimes the flutings of the *Chansons*

des Bois, but oftener sonorous trumpet-blasts from the *Légende des Siècles*.

One day the talk turned on Shakespeare. Fidus asked Leonore the meaning of certain passages that he felt were not adequately translated; and Leonore was mortified that, ignorant though he was of the English original, he was more familiar with the poet than she herself. The discussions were never-ending on this never-ending theme; and at last Fidus suggested, that if not offensive to her English ears, he would read aloud the French version.

Fidus illumined the text of Shakespeare as by flashes of intellect; he read them *Othello*, *Hamlet*; and then came *Macbeth*.

In this last play it thrilled Leonore to the heart to hear Fidus read the scene in which Macbeth comes from the chambered darkness of the murdered king:

*"There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder'
That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them;
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep."*

Fidus seemed transformed; and Leonore, inquisitively gazing at him as he wiped the painful moisture from his temples, wondered at such agitation of art.

"Enough, Fidus, for to-day," René protested; "you excite yourself too much—you do yourself harm."

But the *chansonnier* paid no heed. He knew the

scene by heart, and continued without the book. He recited the dialogue between Macbeth and his fearful wife :

*"One cried 'God bless us !' and 'Amen' the other ;
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say, 'God bless us !'"*

Leonore could never forget the horror-stricken intensity put into the words, "as they had seen me with these hangman's hands"—words that almost iced the blood in her veins while, spellbound, she listened. She again noticed Fidus's hands, which, the day of her first visit to the *cabaret*, had attracted her feminine attention on account of the *bizarre* rings. Now they affected her in a different way—by their morbidness, their mystery, as he held them out in realistic illustration of the text. One could well imagine them "hangman's hands"—hands smeared with dreadful deed.

The day after the *Macbeth* reading, Leonore, on entering the studio, saw that René wore a troubled face.

"I fear that Fidus is about to have one of his old nerve attacks," he told her.

"What do you mean by his 'nerve attacks'?" she curiously asked.

"He has some spinal trouble—'pressure on the brain,' the doctors call it. Fidus is a great sufferer ; but for a long time now he has been in better health. Excitement is always bad for him."

"The *Macbeth* readings, for instance? I noticed that he was much wrought up. It was quite extraordinary; he seemed to *be* rather than act the murderer!"

Leonore had not yet shaken off the strange feelings that had come to her during Fidus's reading of *Macbeth*, and her remark was uttered with intention. But René did not heed her, as he sat musingly before the easel.

"Yes, it must be the readings," he said. "I feel quite anxious about him. Poor Fidus!"

"He has had an unhappy life, then?"

"I know very little about his life."

"What! not even you—his closest friend?" she said, surprised.

"No, mademoiselle; for I have never asked."

Something in the quiet dignity of René's reply forbade her asking further questions. Her curiosity, however, was by no means appeased. Fidus's evident secrecy about his life strengthened her suspicions that his agitation of yesterday was more than art: that personal emotion tinged his reading of the text. Who was this Fidus? All that was known of him was that he had risen out of the tenebrous depths of the Paris ocean—that ocean where so many are swallowed up, and whence now and then emerges something great and unusual from among the undeveloped talents and shipwrecked personalities lying at the bottom. The assumed name of "Fidus" hid even the man's racial origin. Did the atmosphere of

unrest Fidus emanated, Leonore asked herself, hint at some criminal past? Was that the explanation of his "nerves"? She wondered a little at the friendship between René and the *chansonnier*. Yet, after all, was it so hard to understand? There was in the characters of the two men just that element of opposite which unites individuals in some cases. She acknowledged that Fidus had a certain fascination for her. His was a nature that answered her own tragically-keyed temperament. She felt fascinated by Fidus; but she was drawn to René by his refinement of soul, his delicacy of character.

"How devoted you are to Fidus!" she remarked.

"It is natural that I should be," the artist replied. "He has lifted my life from flat, unmeaning levels. All that is best in me, all that is out of the common, all that makes existence worth living, I owe to him."

By discreet questions Leonore won Bouchard to speak of himself. He told her that when a student he courted pleasure like most rich youths of Paris. His father had always been liberal with him, and he was able to gratify all his whims. Soon, however, he had grown weary of *café* life, and the companions that wealth attracts. He saw that he was flattered because of his fortune, and, falling morbid, he ended by suspecting all the world of venal smiles. Pictures had always been a passion with him; and one day, at the Salon, he saw Fidus's series of drawings, "The Wood-carver's Vision." The artisan, haunted by the ideal face, seemed to him eloquent of his own case.

He, too, amid the sordidness of Society felt the glimmer of beauty beckon to him. He resolved that he would become a painter, and attain through art the happiness for which his soul hungered. But his parents had opposed his desire to be an artist ; it was only after much argument and persuasion that they had been prevailed upon to give their consent. Now that he had become a painter, they were impatient to see him a celebrity. They had been disappointed when last year his picture had been refused by the Committee. He, too, had felt discouraged at this failure ; it had been the cause of his hesitation to undertake "The Red Sphinx."

The young man did not add that his parents were so much chagrined over the failure of his Salon picture that they wished him to give up painting and secure worldly prominence by a brilliant marriage—a marriage in which *bourgeois* millions would be exchanged for coveted social prestige.

Leonore was easily able to divine how irreconcilable were the young man's tastes with those of his family ; and, remembering her own struggles with her patroness, Mrs Burton, she felt her sympathies go out to René Bouchard. The importance of the present picture was obvious : it must be a success ; and she resolved to help René make it so by what means lay in her power.

She had already marked how easily the artist was cast down in his work. Obstacles disposed him to question his powers. Reared in ease, young Bouchard

had not acquired the lessons that hardship gives. Leonore knew that the battle of life was for the strong; and she could not help comparing René's character with that of Fidus, the crippled sufferer, whose blood tingled with the iron of the indomitable fighter, on whose harsh features nature had pressed the seal of attainment. She saw that the artist needed the spur of her encouragement. She began, consequently, to flatter him in what he did. By tactful words she infused the belief that "The Red Sphinx" was destined to be a masterpiece.

The illness of the *chansonnier* kept him from the studio for ten days. During this time Leonore succeeded so well in banishing René's fits of depressions that he came to depend on his sitter to arouse in him the spirit of work.

One day René was looking over some sketches he had made of Leonore before starting on the "Sphinx."

"This is Fidus's favourite," he observed, indicating one of the drawings. "Do you like it?"

"Not so much," she answered; "do you?"

The young man glanced from the sketch to the original beside him.

"It doesn't do you justice," he said. "I suppose it is the expression that Fidus likes. I care less for it—you are far more beautiful."

"Then you think me beautiful?" she said. "You have never told me that. You and Fidus are always calling me the 'Tragic Muse'; you never say 'beautiful.'"

She was standing near the easel, her red mantle draped about her shoulders, a challenging smile upon her lips.

"But to call you 'Tragic Muse' is to say that you satisfy the artistic sense."

"Ah!" she cried. "Then you don't think me beautiful—as a woman?"

Her mantle had slipped to the floor, and he stooped to pick it up; but Leonore wilfully put her foot upon it.

"As a woman?" she insisted.

René lifted his eyes to her face. A touch of colour came to his olive cheek.

"You are very beautiful," he said, almost in a whisper.

Leonore gave a slight laugh.

"Thank you," she returned. "Now you may give me my mantle!"

When Fidus returned to the studio after his illness he at once inspected the canvas at which René sat working.

"What have you accomplished?" he asked. "Working too fast, I see. My restraining influence has been needed."

"Encouragement helps sometimes, too, Fidus," René answered with a sense of irritation, such as had never before been called up by his friend's brusque criticisms; and after a moment or so he laid aside his brush.

Leonore shared René's feelings. It seemed to her the *chansonnier* lacked understanding of the artist's temperament. By a word he had counteracted the effect of her inspiring influence.

"Why have you stopped painting?" Fidus asked at length, seeing that the young man sat idle at his easel.

"I don't feel in the mood."

"What a pity!" Leonore remarked. "You have been working so well."

The *chansonnier's* dark eyes flashed.

"I am sorry to have broken the charm, mademoiselle!"

"Read something to us, Fidus," René hastily interposed.

"I don't feel in the mood," Fidus retorted, echoing the other's words.

There was an awkward silence. After a little the *chansonnier* went over to the bookcase and drew out the Shakespeare.

"Where was I the last time?" he demanded.

"At the murder scene in *Macbeth*," Leonore said pointedly.

He gave her a frowning look of enquiry.

"Perhaps, mademoiselle, you would prefer something else?—*The Tempest*? It is a harmless play—a little love-tale only—concerning Miranda and her Ferdinand."

"Yes; don't let us have *Macbeth* to-day, Fidus," said René, remembering its effect on the invalid.

Fidus began reading *The Tempest*, and at once the studio became peopled with the characters of the play. Ariel whirled on cobweb wings; the drunken mariners plotted with uncouth Caliban; hand in hand strayed the lovers, lost in youthful dream.

"Bear with my weakness ; my old brain is troubled."

As he recited Prosper's words, Fidus paused.

René looked up.

"You are over-tasking yourself!" he said anxiously.

"No, it is nothing." And the *chansonnier*, taking up his book, read on until he came to the scene where blessings are bestowed on the happy lovers. At this point he suddenly threw down the volume and rose.

"You are not going?" René exclaimed.

"Yes; I am not well." And, taking his hat, Fidus moved to the door. There he turned and said harshly: "Farewell, Ferdinand and Miranda—Caliban leaves you!"

Transfixed with astonishment and dismay, René stared at the door which had hastily closed on his friend. Then, turning to Leonore, he faltered:

"You must pardon Fidus, mademoiselle; he is not himself."

She saw how deeply wounded he was by the *chansonnier's* action: and out of consideration for him she found a pretext for leaving. But he insisted

on accompanying her to Place Vintimille, where Leonore now lived, that she might be near the *cabaret*.

Distract and still embarrassed, he said little on the way.

On bidding her farewell at her door, he held her hands in a lingering clasp.

"You are not hurt?" he asked anxiously. And on Leonore's assurances that she had already forgot the incident, he added: "You do not know, mademoiselle, what these sittings have meant to me. They have given me new courage; changed life for me——"

His eyes sought hers for a moment; and Leonore read in his face what shyness kept back in his heart.

CHAPTER X

LOVE'S PURPLE LIGHT

LEONORE was made thoughtful by the incident of Fidus's visit to the *atelier*. She saw that she threatened to become a discordant element in the friendship of the two men. Fidus, though responsible for the intimacy between herself and René—since it was he who had removed the obstacle to the sittings—had apparently not foreseen what was to be the outcome of these daily meetings with the young artist. Leonore could hardly blame Fidus for resenting his reception at the *atelier*: it was only human that he should feel the slight of being transplanted in René's life.

The visit had shown what progress in intimacy René and she had made in the weeks that they had been alone together. So accustomed had they become to the *chansonnier's* absence, that his return had affected them almost as an intrusion on their privacy. Leonore acknowledged that she had augmented the awkwardness of the situation. Prudence told her she had committed a grave mistake in allowing her antagonism towards Fidus

to manifest itself. The antagonism she set down as springing from the suspicion that the *chansonnier* concealed some guilty secret in his life. But, after all, what were his secrets to her? Fidus had furthered her in her profession, and she owed him her gratitude. Not only had he given her an engagement at the *cabaret* — he made her his debtor by coaching her in her Conservatory work. To alienate him was to hinder her stage career, to lose an invaluable adjutor at a critical moment in her life. She resolved that she should do what she could to close the threatened breach. They must all three remain the friends that they had formerly been.

Leonore saw that one of the effects of Fidus's ironic speech on leaving the *atelier* was to awaken René to a realisation of his love for her. A declaration had trembled on the artist's tongue at their last parting. Fidus, on his return, had divined the truth of his friend's feelings! his brusque act had served to draw it to light. He had, either through jealousy or other cause, forced an issue that might have been evaded. It was too late to evade it after what had happened.

Leonore asked herself if she wished for the love of René Bouchard. She had never seriously contemplated the possibility of sentimental relations with the young Frenchman. She had, it was true, on several occasions indulged in light coquetries with him that gratified her woman's vanity; for she could

not always rise above the weaknesses of her sex ; but in practising these arts she had been innocent of any real design—she had made no attempt to arouse more than interest, admiration. She saw now that she had been indiscreet. She should have remembered her experiences with Louis Damart, let them serve as lessons of caution.

René's love? It was hers to have if she willed. The thought caused her a certain pleasure ; it caressed the knowledge she had of her beauty, her youth, her charm. Yet common-sense counselled her to reject the desire for this love as something not heart-born, but proceeding from the moment's mood. It was far wiser that they should remain mere friends. Friendship was a harbour of peace ; love the stormy sea which threatened to engulf her barque of ambition.

" *Un artiste qui veut parvenir doit faire quelques sacrifices* " : she recalled the words of Villemot, and renewed ardour for art fired her spirit : the superficial emotions that René's tribute to her sex aroused, vanished from her heart. Her art must have no rival ; she must hold herself free from all other allurements of life. As she had sacrificed love in the past, so she would sacrifice love again !

Her Conservatory lessons prevented Leonore from sitting to René for several days ; and her *cabaret* recitations being on alternate nights, it was not until the second evening after their parting that she saw the young man.

She had not perceived him in the audience, which chanced to be unusually large ; and in truth she had hardly remembered to look for him in the corner where he usually sat. Her mind had been occupied with a new poem of Fidus's which he had written for her. Leonore had prepared the poem with unusual care, in expectation of Fidus's presence at the *cabaret*. Uncertain of his attitude towards her—for she had not seen him since the studio episode—she calculated that to surprise him by some fresh proof of her talent was the surest means to hold his favour. She had, however, on reaching the *cabaret*, found a note from the *chansonnier*, saying that he would not be able to appear that night, and asking her to recite something instead from her old repertory. Leonore had therefore given a poem of Fidus's called *Night*, a poem full of melancholy power, depicting the anguish of the human soul cast helpless on the void, and beholding the vision of creation as a vast and intricate machine, the shadowy wheels of which whirled on changeless and indifferent to the individual atom. The poem had been received with considerable enthusiasm ; and Leonore, despite her disappointment at Fidus's absence, had recovered much of her confidence in herself and her future relations with the man to whom she owed her present prestige.

As she was leaving the *cabaret* she met René, who was waiting for her at the door. She noted, with a certain feeling of self-reproach, that, in the

glare of the *cabaret* light, his face looked drawn and pale, even under the sting of the dry, wintry air. His eyes, beneath the shadow-line of his soft hat, had a feverish brightness.

He came forward quickly and caught her hands in both of his in greeting; then they turned down the boulevard in the direction of the Place Vintimille.

"I have been waiting outside," he said, after they had proceeded a few paces, "because I could not bear the noise and lights of the *cabaret* to-night. I wanted to see you—but I wanted to see you alone, so I could free my heart of its burden. But how slowly the hours passed! I could not have endured it except for hearing your voice—that wonderful, troubling voice of yours—which came to me there at the door. Oh, Leonore, I love you! I have loved you since the first—I know it now. I have suffered so much since the other day: I wanted to write—but I could not put on paper what I felt. After you left the *atelier* I wondered why I had not spoken then; I was wanting to speak as we walked together to your door; and when we parted—again I almost told you."

He went on falteringly, yet with a certain passionate eloquence:

"I cannot gauge the meaning of this love—I do not know if I am too happy or terribly miserable. I only know that I am no more myself; that my life is no more the same. Oh, Leonore, I am so torn! I feel that poor Fidus is wounded by the

way I have treated him; yet I know my love for you is greater—so much greater—than my gratitude to the man who has done everything for me. I never knew what love was like—that it could torture one so. I see now that I have never loved before—that I only dreamed I loved in the past. Everything that matters seems to have been waiting until now—waiting for you. It is you who have created me, so I may live by virtue of your love.”

She made a movement to reply; but, disregarding, he continued:

“I want to tell you how completely I am mastered by this love—how it robs me of self-control and inspires the most desperate jealous fears. I am mad lest Fidus loves you, lest he take you from me. Fidus has such greatness—power that meets the power in yourself. You were meant for one another—yet I cannot yield you to him. Tell me, Leonore, that you do not love him—although he loves you?”

“My poor friend, you are indeed mad. Fidus does not love me.”

“And you—you do not love him?”

“Be assured; I do not love him in the least. He is only a friend—the good friend of both of us.”

She spoke with soothing gentleness. She had not expected that René's confession would so move her heart; yet, affected as she was, she felt no yielding of her resolve to reject his love.

René talked on in his hesitating, vivid way, telling

her of the unconscious growth of his feelings. His nature had been strangely stirred by their first meeting at the *cabaret*, when she had come to deliver her trial recitation of the *Sphinx*. As he reflected over it, it seemed to him that some new spirit had awakened in him then; the morbidity and heart despairs that had afflicted him had vanished under the spell of her society. The interest she had shown in his painting had been his inspiration. Under the influence of her encouragement, he felt that he might achieve those early art dreams which had grown a mockery. Yes, he had long loved her; but it had taken Fidus to arouse him to the knowledge of his sentiments. That day at the studio, when Fidus had left them with his strange farewell, he had recognised the truth—that she was essential to his happiness.

Leonore would have stopped the eager flow of his words; but she perceived that he suffered, and that his suffering found relief in speech.

He paused at last, and turned his gaze upon her in anxious appeal. His face was so full of agitation that Leonore found the task she had set herself a painful one. She tried to soften the wound that she must deal him.

“Dear friend,” she said, “I am to blame for what has happened. I did not mean to mislead you; but I have done so, nevertheless. What you have told me cruelly punishes me for my woman’s vanity.”

His expression showed he did not understand; and she went on:

"I have been selfish: I wished you for my friend, so I made an effort to attract you, thinking only of that—of the pleasure your friendship would give my life. I was wrong—I know now how wrong it was. Will you ever forgive me for causing you to misunderstand, to think——"

He interrupted her with a quick gesture of despair. His face had turned a ghastly hue, while the effort to master his disappointment showed in the distorted lips that stammered lifelessly:

"There is nothing to forgive. Is it your fault that I should have dared to hope for your love?"

In silence they walked on a moment. Leonore shared something of his wretchedness as she said:

"I can never forgive myself for bringing this trouble into your life."

"You must not reproach yourself," he answered in the same dull tone. "I shall go away—shall travel a while. I cannot forget; but I shall learn to bear."

"You will go away?" she cried. "And the picture you are painting—you will abandon that? No, no; you must not go away. You must remain in Paris."

"My picture? The picture was my love for you. It is nothing without. It was only part—of the dream."

"No, but it must not be," she said in increasing distress. "You must follow your art; live your

life as before. I implore you not to grieve me by going away."

"You ask what is impossible," he returned sadly. "Paris will be the cup of remembrance. You would not ask me to drink daily a draught of torment? No; I must go far from you, mademoiselle, if I would find courage to live."

Before Leonore's mind passed in rapid review a vision of the complications that would spring from this resolve of René's. If Fidus were already alienated from her by what had occurred, what would be his feelings when he learned that she had driven his friend from Paris, thus breaking up entirely the daily intercourse of the studio, the hundred interests that united the two men? Would he forgive her for the injury to René's artistic career? If René went away, Fidus might not continue to coach her. Leonore was far from wishing to inflict pain on her lover; but the dictate of self-interest persuaded her that she spoke for his good when she bade him remain.

"Listen, my friend," she said earnestly. "You must not commit this folly: you must not desert your work, your world, all that claims you here in Paris. Believe me, I counsel you for your real happiness when I tell you to stay, and, more than that, to see me as heretofore. I am done with coquetry, which has only brought trouble on us both; you need never fear me again. Let there be struck a real pact of friendship between us. Yes," she reiterated with a winning smile, seeing

him make a gesture as of refusal, "a pact of friendship. You do not believe in friendship now, because you do not wish to believe in it. The thought offends the feelings you have for me, does it not? But those feelings will pass—for the reason that they are born of illusions about me. It is not I you love; it is a mere phantom your fancy has created. I am not the woman you think. I could not be if I tried."

"Whatever you are can make no difference to my love."

"Let time be the judge of that, my friend. Come; promise me that you will make the experiment for a few weeks, at all events. If it fail, then leave Paris. I shall not oppose it. But, for the present, promise me that you will do as I ask."

"You are asking me to suffer, mademoiselle. Why should you wish me to suffer?"

"Ah, but your suffering will be far more if you go away! For you will carry away with you this unreal me you love in your heart. No, I am wiser; I know what is best. Stay here. We shall continue the sittings; you shall see me often. You will learn to know me for what I am—the actress incapable of caring passionately for anything but her art. Yes, yes; you adore me now. But you will see—the imaginary woman will fade. She will fade, and in her place you will find the true Leonore—the Leonore who means to be the sincere and helpful friend!"

He shook his head mournfully.

"It will be of no avail — this experiment you propose; but I promise to stay, since you ask it. After all, it is not difficult to promise you, mademoiselle. My heart bids it — even at the price of pain."

"It will not be pain," she smiled. "My friendship is far, far better than any love I have to give." Then, after a pause she added: "Shall I come, then, to the studio for the sittings? I wish to begin at once upon the cure, and the best cure will be to live our lives together as before — as if nothing had happened."

They had been standing before the door of the apartment-house where Leonore lodged; and she extended her hand to her companion.

"Yes, yes," he murmured, "I wish it."

"And Fidus—you must tell him to read to us as of old. We must not make him feel that he is neglected or unwelcome. Ah, monsieur, believe me, it is all for the best. We must go back to the past, and be the good friends we were once—you, Fidus, and I."

"Yes, poor Fidus!" René answered in a remorseful voice. "I blame myself for treating him so ill; but I could not help wanting to be happy with you alone."

"To-morrow, then," she said.

"Yes, to-morrow," he echoed; and, kissing her hand passionately, he turned away into the darkness.

As Leonore withdrew her hand, she found it wet with tears.

CHAPTER XI

THE KINSHIP OF PITY

LEONORE, on parting with René at her door, congratulated herself on the happy turn events had taken. She had won the young artist's consent to remain in Paris and continue his work on the picture; she had dispelled his jealousy of Fidus; the two men would be again united; and the life of all three promised to return to its old footing. Yet the thought of Fidus still troubled her a little; she continued to speculate over his conduct in leaving the studio with a sneering farewell on his tongue. His irritability, his lack of self-control, was so unlike the *chansonnier* — who had ever displayed a calm and dignified bearing which she recognised as the true note of his character. His feelings, then, must have been deeply stirred to have caused so strange an exhibition of bad taste. René's words, "Fidus loves you," still echoed in her mind; and she wondered if the jealousy of his friend had any warrant for its existence. She could not believe it true; yet if Fidus indeed entertained passionate sentiments for her, she had assuredly

done the prudent thing that night in prevailing upon his rival to abide in Paris and agree to her experiment. Fidus would see from her manner towards the artist that the love he suspected between the two had passed; that she did not intend to encourage it. And that, supplemented by her greater cordiality to himself, would ensure the peace which the studio episode had disturbed.

In advising René to stay by her side, rather than carry his disappointment into exile, Leonore had, as she told him, counselled for the best, even while self-interest had played its part. She realised that the Frenchman loved her, but she judged his nature as hysterical, and not likely to remain long under its wild stress of passion. He would grow calm, reconciled, as day by day she exercised her tact in showing him considerate friendship, while yet plainly declaring the absence of love in her heart. René was poetic, vivid; not the type of person in whom passion endured in the face of uncompromising discouragement.

She went, as she had agreed, to the *atelier* next day. René, on greeting her, displayed some embarrassment, but Leonore, mistress of herself, gradually put him at his ease; and the work on the picture proceeded. Obedient to her command, the young man endeavoured to suppress the lover, but sadness was written on his pale and languid face; and Leonore felt not a little moved at the tokens of his secret sufferings.

Fidus did not appear during the sitting; but she saw him next night at the *cabaret*, where he recited the new poem in dialogue with her, and congratulated her on the spirit in which she had prepared her part. His manner, while reserved, was not discourteous. Leonore felt much relieved at this; and she surmised that the meeting between the two friends had taken place, and without unhappy consequences. The *chansonnier* did not, however, resume his readings at the *atelier*; and when she asked of René the reason of his absence, he told her that Fidus still complained of feeling ill, but that he had promised later to pay them his visits as before. He said nothing more on the subject, and Leonore pressed enquiry no further, not wishing to revive the painful issues of the past.

It was perhaps a week later that Leonore received a call from Mademoiselle Yvonne at her apartment.

Leonore had continued to see something of her little friend of the Cours Bassot, for whom she had conceived a considerable liking, owing to the lively chatter of the young woman, and the flattering homage she paid her as a *grande tragédienne* destined to rival Bernhardt, Bartet, and Segond-Weber in the threatical world of Paris. Mademoiselle Yvonne had failed, like Louis Damart, to pass the Conservatory examinations; and, after Leonore's success as a reciter at the Cabaret des Sept Péchés Capitaux, she had sought Leonore to ask her to help her find an engagement.

Her family, so the little *soubrette* informed her, had met with "reverses," and her mother, on becoming a widow, had found a position as *concierge* on Rue Bon. It was sad and stupid at home, where she tired herself "like a beast"; and so she had decided to follow "the life of an artist." She had not much talent, she admitted; but talent could be learned. Patience was one of her greatest virtues; and she, at least, possessed a nice voice, which, like her pretty face and figure, were recommendations. So she had entered the Cours Bassot, where she gaily applied herself to her studies, and contentedly, between *répliques*, nibbled the *brioche*s she carried in her pocket for lunch. Leonore had done what she could to assist Yvonne in her theatrical ambitions; but as her influence was limited to an acquaintance with Fidus and the struggling *chansonniers* of the *cabaret*, nothing had resulted from her efforts.

Yvonne continued from time to time to visit Leonore with news of her adventures. One day she triumphantly appeared to announce that she had found an engagement at last. Some one had given her a card to a noted critic. He had received her, and she had stammered through a scene of Musset. The critic had condescended to give the *réplique* of Perdican, and, as Yvonne told Leonore, he did it with such zeal that he quite forgot to listen to her. When she had finished, he had pronounced her *bien moderne*—a quality that pleased him, for he protected the

jeunes—and had recommended her to a theatre where aspirants are given unimportant parts as drill for the *métier*. Finally better fortune had fallen to her by chance. An artist had left, and the Director, seeking among the pupils, had picked on Yvonne to fill the vacant *rôle*.

After that Leonore did not see the *soubrette* for some time. Leonore was beginning to wonder what had become of her, when one morning she again presented herself at Place Vintimille.

In greeting her Leonore remarked :

“What pretty colour you have to-day, Yvonne !”

Yvonne hurried to a mirror and carefully inspected herself.

“*Mon Dieu, c'est vrai !*” she exclaimed. And, taking out her silver gilt *nécessaire*, she lavishly powdered her cheeks.

“Is it all gone ?” she demanded.

“What—the colour ? I thought it so becoming.”

“Do you think I want to be taken for a *paysanne* ?” was the scornful reply. She gave a finishing dab to her nose. Then, settling herself, she heaved a sigh. “Ah, mademoiselle ! To think I keep my colour—and such *malheurs* as I have had !”

“Really ?” Leonore smiled ; for she could not always take her friend’s troubles seriously. “I thought, now that you have your theatre engagement, your trials were at an end !”

“Ah, it’s all on account of that, the engagement. Louis——” And Yvonne’s tears started to her eyes.

"You have quarrelled again with Monsieur Damart?"

"Yes, a real quarrel, mademoiselle,—not like the others. You remember how jealous he used to be at the Cours Bassot? Ah, those were happy days! Poor Louis! I wonder if he still thinks of me? We have made up so many times. But it's all over between us now."

"You never see him?"

"No, never. He became frightfully jealous. The directors—you understand. The actors. Everybody. He was always thinking, always saying—And I love him. It is so hard there at the theatre. Decidedly, it's not all colour of rose in the *métier*—especially if one is too proud—you understand. Ah, mademoiselle you have been fortunate: you have 'arrived' without having to trail through the mud; you have not had to experience these things!"

"But life is difficult for all, Yvonne!"

"Yes; but more difficult for some, mademoiselle. You have not had to begin at the beginning; to wait at the foot of the ladder. If you only knew the lot of the hundreds that wait—wait to mount to where you are, and never succeed. Yes, it is very sad for the *bravettes*, those who trudge in all weathers, dine every other day, tiring their feet for hours on the stage—just a background for the beautiful *jeunes premières*, the *amoureuses*. And what does one get for being prudent, mademoiselle? Only shrugs and lifted brows. 'Is it that she has not found any

one yet?' they say. That is the reward! Oh; it takes courage; believe me, mademoiselle. One loses heart, working on and seeing nothing ahead. I am going to hand back my *rôle*!"

"So you will give up your vocation, Yvonne?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, the 'vocation'! You may call it that—you. But for those like myself it is a word one uses only at the risk of being ridiculous. The vocation is for one's family, one's friends, the public! It's a fine word that they use when they want to excuse the life they lead—these followers of the 'vocation.' I have seen what I have seen mademoiselle—I know. Yes, I am leaving the 'vocation.' And it's for Louis's sake. Perhaps when he hears—— For, oh, mademoiselle, I love him, I love him!" And Yvonne sobbed out her grief in Leonore's arms.

The sittings had now continued at the studio for some time. The *chansonnier* occasionally paid visits, but rarely; and he had not yet taken up his old habit of reading; nor did he speak of assisting Leonore in her Conservatory work. He spoke of his health somewhat in the tone of the valetudinarian. His strength, he said, hardly sufficed to meet the tax of the *cabaret*. His recitations there were irregular; and Leonore oftener than not appeared in poems written for her alone, or in dialogue with other *chansonniers* whom Fidus engaged. These came and went, many through dissatisfaction with the Director; for Fidus was frequently violent with

them in his criticisms, and that led to quarrels and dismissals. All this outside trouble figured as excuse for neglecting Leonore's coaching and fewer visits to the studio.

René, on his part, often touched Leonore by his fits of silence, by the brooding dejection with which he laboured at his picture. She saw it was only in obedience to her wish that he continued a task which gave justification for Leonore being so much with him. The subject of his love never came up in their conversation; though the painter's melancholy languor was a constant reminder to his companion that his mind and heart still suffered through remembrance and the sentiments she had pledged herself to banish.

One day he told her that, according to a yearly custom, he intended giving a reception at his *hôtel*. Although he accepted a few invitations in the social and bohemian world, he felt obliged occasionally to entertain, especially as throwing open his home to his list of acquaintances pleased his parents, who deprecated his indifference to the claims of Society.

These receptions of René's were a source of much pride to the *restaurateur* and his wife. They had lavished a fortune on their son's installation in the handsome *hôtel-studio*, and it flattered their *bourgeois* pride to have the world behold the magnificence of the appointments. Invitations were scattered broadcast. The florists had reason, in truth, to rejoice over

the princely order for rare plants and cut flowers with which the Bouchards filled the house. Bouchard Senior himself attended to the supper, which, under his personal supervision, was all that the fastidious *gourmet* might ask. Indeed, it frequently chanced that René, remarking his absence among the guests, would discover him in the *cuisine*, his broadcloth coat discarded and his shirt sleeves rolled up, composing a certain sauce, the receipt for which had been handed down from his grandfather, the inspired *chef*, praised by Royalty, and the founder of the fortunes of the Bouchard family. Years of retirement from active participation in the conduct of his famous boulevard establishment had not diminished Père Bouchard's enthusiasm for his art; and if he lacked the wisdom of a Brillat-Savarin, he had, at all events, that philosopher's reverence for the palate.

Leonore had gone late to the reception, after the closing of the *cabaret*, where she had insisted on reciting, so that Fidus might be free for the evening, and the programme not fail of its two chief attractions. She had no great desire to attend the Bouchard function, for she had few acquaintances in Paris, and did not wish to be a tax on her host; her acceptance had been rather to please René. A certain curiosity enlivened her to see the old Bouchard couple which her imagination had pictured, with considerable accuracy, as typical representatives of the prosperous *bourgeois* class, solid of bulk, and with the prejudices under which their son had suffered plainly indicated

in their face and manner. She wondered if René had ever spoken of her to them, if they knew of her intimacy with their son, and that she was the sitter for the picture on which he was engaged. In case of the latter knowledge they might view her in the light of a professional model, whose presence at the reception was a concession; although, as she surmised, there would be many members of the bohemian world to which she belonged. Despite her pride in her profession Leonore was not altogether oblivious to some claim she possessed to social recognition. Her mother's French antecedents had been thoroughly respectable; and in her native Chicago, as the *protégée* of Mrs Burton, she had moved in what were considered the best circles. Indeed, Leonore, not unjustifiably, held herself superior, according to worldly standards, to the pretensions of the Bouchards.

On her way through the *salons*, Leonore encountered the *chansonnier*, who, leaving those with whom he was talking, conducted her to the presence of Madame Bouchard, a flushed and rather comely matron, who evidently considered that the sparkle of her diamonds compensated for lack of mental brilliance; and after the introduction, which, as Leonore noted with some chagrin, produced no sense of her identity on her hostess, the two stepped aside from the main current of guests, where they stood a while spectators of the scene.

After discussing the *cabaret* for a time—Leonore

seldom neglected opportunity to impress on the Director her interest in this affair—Fidus left his companion to fetch her a glass of champagne. During his absence Leonore amused herself studying the various types gathered together with all the indiscrimination of an affair given by *parvenus* who, if they would fill their house, cannot afford to be too particular. She let her eyes roam in search of René, whom she had not yet seen; but she failed to discover him until aided by a conversation taking place near where she waited, and in which the name of René Bouchard figured. The two men—one, Leonore fancied, might be a journalist—were discussing the artist. The listener followed their gaze, and was rewarded by perceiving René occupied with two ladies—seemingly mother and daughter—who, as she at once noted, possessed the air of belonging to a *milieu* different from that enjoyed by most of the other guests.

“Yes, the Marquise de Villemère and her daughter,” she heard the speaker answer, as if in reply to the other’s query. “One would have said the marriage were impossible a few decades ago; but now nothing surprises. The old Marquis was a devout *gourmet*; and that, doubtless, will help reconcile his shade to the smell of cooking in the family. The Bouchard saucepan is well gilded; and the De Villemères are poor, of course—even for the old Faubourg. What with time and a son for rake they can scarce stop the leaks in their dilapidated St Dominique *hôtel*. I

believe the son and Bouchard were friends, and this probably led—as the latter was free with his loans—to the introduction to the De Villemère household. That is how the old *noblesse* pay their debts nowadays. The daughter is a trifle *passée*; but what would you? Decidedly a match for a pastry-cook's son!"

"I thought that Bouchard was vowed to his Thebaid cave and saintly celibacy. Montmartre quotes him as its unique anchorite."

"What! you have not heard of *la belle Américaine*, Fidus's *protégée*? All is changed at the *cabaret* since the advent of the new Star. The 'Seven Capital Sins' are congratulating themselves on the spicy situation. It was at first, it seems, a romance of Beauty and the Beast. Now the young saint is receiving his *éducation sentimentale* in preparation for his aristocratic nuptials. The betrothal is soon to be chronicled; you may take it for granted, the Marchioness would not show herself in this gathering except the marriage were a settled thing."

They moved off, leaving Leonore burning with indignation at what she had heard. Her eyes had been fixed the while on the subjects of the discussion. In the hostile survey she made of the younger woman, Leonore picked on enough defects of person to give her satisfaction. Mademoiselle de Villemère was certainly not beautiful, although she had the charm of the modest and well-bred girl, which partly compensated for her plainness and the marks of

departing freshness. Evidently suppressed, when out in the world, by a watchful mother, she appeared contented now to remain silent during the conversation. Leonore was unable to study René's face, but her angry feelings caused her to picture it as eagerly courting the condescension of the match-making matron, forced to barter lineage for the millions of a vulgar caterer. Something told her to credit the gossip that had just reached her ear. Yes, she could well believe in the probability of this alliance between the Bouchard upstarts and a poverty-stricken family of the Faubourg St Germain anxious to rehabilitate its evil fortunes. She thought of Madame Bouchard, loaded with her incongruous diamonds, the old *restaurateur*, awkward in his broadcloth and rebellious shirt-front, how they must favour such a union!

She smarted under the memory of René's confession of love, which must have been with full knowledge of the marriage arrangement being made between him and Mademoiselle de Villemère. So he had, then, in offering her his heart, not dreamed of according her his hand; his pleadings had been an invitation to become his mistress. She was *la belle Américaine*, whose task was to have been to amuse René until he had made his triumphal entry into houses where his ancestors had probably been *chefs*.

To Leonore it seemed an added insult that the unconscious young man had not yet accorded her

the greeting to which she was entitled that night as his guest. No ; he was too absorbed in his aristocratic companions to notice her arrival.

Fidus returned with the glass of wine.

"What delicious champagne!" she said, as she tasted it. "But it is only what one might expect at an entertainment given by a Bouchard. René tells me his father takes such interest in seeing that his suppers cast no discredit on the name. You know the great restaurant well, I suppose? I must beg René to take me there some time to satisfy my curiosity. My father was a scholar, and too wrapped up in the classics to care for the table. I was brought up to hear more talk about Greek and Roman life than of *chaudfroids* and sauces."

"But, mademoiselle," the *chansonnier* smiled dryly, "the classics are full of the gastronomic art. The Romans were famous entertainers. Think of the feasts of Lucullus, the banquet scenes left us by Petronius in his *Satyricon*, the descriptions in Pliny's Letters!"

"Yes ; but how different the ancients were from people of to-day ! It would be rather difficult, for instance, to imagine the elder Monsieur Bouchard as a Roman—even of Couture's picture ! But I must slip away now. I feel tired to-night, and only stopped in for a moment—since I had promised René."

"But shall I not find René for you? Ah, he is over there, I see, talking to two ladies."

"Yes, the Marquise de Villemère and her daughter,

is it not? You approve of the match, of course. Mademoiselle de Villemère is charming; I have been admiring her while you were gone. René is certainly to be very much congratulated. No, monsieur, do not let us disturb him," she continued smilingly, "it would be too unkind."

"You know, then——"

"I do, indeed," she returned with the air of the privileged *confidante*. "You forget, monsieur, that René and I are comrades!" And, refusing the *chansonnier's* offer to accompany her home she left the *hôtel*.

She had scarcely reached the street when René overtook her.

"Leonore," he said breathlessly, "why are you leaving so soon? Fidus has just told me about you being at the house. I am so sorry I missed you—I have been watching for you all evening."

"Really? I should hardly have supposed it," she said coldly. "You seemed to me altogether occupied with Mademoiselle de Villemère. That is the name, is it not, of your *fiancée*?"

"My *fiancée*, Leonore!"

"Yes; why do you deny it?" she answered angrily.

You expected, then, that I should remain ignorant of what all the world knows? You did me a great honour, monsieur, when a short time ago you told me you loved me. Had I been aware then of the position you were asking me to fill, I fear my reply would have been less considerate than it was."

"It is not true, Leonore!" he exclaimed. "How can you think me capable of insulting you so? The rumour of my engagement to Mademoiselle de Villemère is mere gossip. The Marquise's son is an old acquaintance of mine; but I scarcely know the family."

"And is that necessary to a *mariage de covenance*? Mademoiselle de Villemère's hand is, it appears, for sale." She smiled bitterly. "It is presumably an idle report also that your parents are ambitious their son should enter the Faubourg St. Germain? The presence of the De Villemères at your reception to-night is, at least—significant."

"I know it, Leonore," René answered, with a simple dignity. "The De Villemères are not likely to have paid me the honour of coming to my house under ordinary circumstances. My position in the social world is very different from theirs: and I do not deny that it would please my parents if I married Mademoiselle de Villemère."

"And why not do so, then, monsieur? The marriage seems to me in every way an advantageous one. Mademoiselle de Villemère is quite attractive."

"You need to ask?" he said sadly. "Ah, mademoiselle, I have not spoken again of my love for you, since you forbade it; but do you think my silence proves I love you any the less? It is because my heart is yours that I have been unable to listen to my parents. The thought of this worldly match is hateful to me—I shall never consent to it."

"Forgive me, René," she said with quick contrition. "I should not have misjudged you. What I heard to-night so stung my pride by its cruelty that I was blinded by my feelings. For, believe me, I am an actress who reveres her art as one of the noblest of vocations. I forget that the world does not share my opinion, that it looks upon an actress as an unclassed woman, who is not entitled to its consideration or respect. And I persuaded myself that you, too——"

"Ah, it is because you do not love me that you could imagine such a thing," he cried with emotion. "If you loved me you would understand that my life lies in worship at your feet; that I hold you above all women. Leonore, Leonore, have you no mercy? Do you not see that my suffering is more than I can bear? These last weeks have told me the uselessness even of leaving you. No, there is but one path to peace for me." He made a wild gesture of despair; and his slight figure shook as with ague.

"You are trembling," she said, seeing his agitation; "you should not have come out so." For René in his haste had not stopped to protect himself against the night, but was walking by her side in evening dress, his head bare. "I beg of you to go back to the house!"

"No, no," he answered, the tears starting. "I cannot leave you. It is not the air that chills me. Ah, I suffer, Leonore, I suffer!"

"My poor, poor René! how can I comfort you!" Leonore said tenderly, laying her hand upon his arm. "I wish to be your friend—is that nothing to you?"

But he thrust her hand from him.

"Your friendship? I do not want it—nor your pity. It but makes my life more bitter that you offer me these things. They only remind me that you do not love me, and increase my despair. You tell me to leave you. Yes, I shall leave you—but it is for ever. You will never see me more. Give me your lips, your hands, that I may kiss them for the last time." He seized her hands and pressed them to his breast with feverish passion, repeating her name.

"René!" she said, her own tears coming. "René!"

"Ah!" he murmured, "you grieve a little for me, Leonore! It makes me happy that you grieve a little. I shall remember after we have parted that you gave me your tears. Yes, it will be sweet to remember. They will help me to meet the darkness—the darkness, Leonore, where the heart may go to sleep and forget its pain. How much kinder the darkness will be than life!"

"René," she implored, "do not speak like that! What can I do to help you—to save you from yourself? You tear me with your words. I do not know the things I ought to say to you."

He was turning away, but she caught his hand and went on quickly:

"Listen! I am a woman who has never loved;

I may not have the capacity in me to love. I have mistaken myself in the past; I may mistake myself again. It may all be far worse—worse for you, worse for both—that I promise to try to love you. But I promise — I cannot let you suffer like this.”

They had reached the little Place Vintimille, where Leonore lived. Under the dark, star-strewn sky the trees stood solitary, with here and there a bench placed under the gaunt, budding branches.

“Yes,” she said, after a pause, “I promise you, René! I am yours, since you will have it so. Here is a seat; rest a while and grow calm. My mantle is large enough for both. There! poor, poor friend, you are trembling! Put your head on my breast, that you thought so hard and unkind. You see, life has not betrayed you—it gives you peace after all!”

“Leonore, this is a dream!” he murmured, his cheek against her bosom.

“Perhaps,” she answered. “But let us dream it!”

“Together, Leonore!”

“Yes, René, together!”

CHAPTER XII

"*MERCI*, DENISE!"

LEONORE had never been more the woman than when she told René that she would marry him. The impulse sprang from uncalculating, generous emotions—from compassion stirred in her by the young artist's suffering and despair.

Yet it was inevitable, perhaps, that later, when she soberly reflected on what she had done, she should consider its practical effects upon her life. Was this marriage going to be a detriment or an advantage to her stage career?

The possible benefits of a union with the heir to the Bouchard millions marshalled themselves before Leonore's mind. As the wife of René she would at least be saved from many of the bitter experiences which were the lot of the average struggling actress whose self-respect revolted against the only too common path of professional advancement. The confidences of little Yvonne had awakened Leonore to the sordid and seamy side of life behind the footlights, a side with which fortune had so far happily saved her from coming

in contact. Yet who could tell to what desperate and degrading straits she might be reduced as artist if, deprived of powerful allies and without means, she were compelled to fight fortune single-handed?

That she should continue to act after becoming René's wife Leonore had taken for granted; René could not other than consent to that. But she was agreeably surprised to find that, far from merely acquiescing, her lover, in discussing their future together, manifested an eager interest in her theatrical ambitions.

"I want you to be great," he told her; "and I mean to do all in my power to help you to greatness." And he informed her of a long-cherished scheme of Fidus's and his to found a theatre in Montmartre devoted to the highest art—where Shakespeare and the Greek drama in literal prose translation should be given with all becoming accessories. This would be Leonore's own theatre, the temple of her genius; there she might shine without hindrance of directors, or jealousy and intrigue of rivals.

It was with heightened pulse that Leonore listened to the plan that René unfolded; for, in truth, it was more alluring than anything she had in her sanguine moments conceived as a future possibility.

Her marriage, in consequence, put on a wholly different aspect: she could no longer think of it as representing a sacrifice of her life to another's happiness. Although she had not coveted her

suitors' fortune when that fortune meant mere personal ease at the price of a forfeited artistic career—for Leonore was not vulgarly sordid despite ungratified taste for luxuries—yet she could scarce fail to take it into consideration now that it opened so brilliant a field to her actress ambitions. It spoke with an eloquent tongue to her heart, which she had already vowed to coerce as far as possible into feelings meet in a betrothed woman. René Bouchard with the gift of a Montmartre theatre in his hands was a man less difficult to love than the artist whose plea was the abstract passion he bore her.

And now that the interest of the actress was aroused, Leonore's mind became possessed with fear lest the marriage might never be realised.

The looming obstacle to her marriage, Leonore well understood, would be the opposition of the Bouchard family. The glimpse she had had at the reception of the *bourgeois* couple sufficed to give her uneasiness. She saw that even if René's parents could be persuaded to forego their idea of an aristocratic alliance for their son, they would be little disposed to look with favour on an unknown American girl — on one who had not even acquired, as an actress, the consideration in the world which genius commands. Such a match for René would seem to them wholly preposterous.

René had already told her enough about his difficulties with his family to cause her to recognise

the importance of his success as an artist. It was only, in fact, through such success that he could hope to live his life as he willed, and still count on the kindness of his parents. Should he make a failure of art, then his marriage with herself might only take place by René disregarding family wishes, through open filial defiance. What practical complications would not arise from such domestic misunderstanding? René would suffer in feelings in provoking his father's displeasure, and doubtless would be deprived of the ample income he now enjoyed. In a word, the situation was likely to be a repetition of that in which George Burton involved himself at Cherbourg with his mother.

Leonore's heart welled with bitterness at the thought.

How much hung on the fate of "The Red Sphinx"!

The sittings at the studio had continued regularly; and Leonore had done her utmost to incite the artist to his former enthusiasm for work; but little progress had notwithstanding been made; René had painted mechanically, without heart, showing in all he did the oppressed spirits of the rejected lover. Fidus no longer volunteered his whilom brusque but helpful criticism, and his evasive comments when asked proved that his real opinion was far from flattering. This had further contributed to René's discouragement about his picture.

But since Leonore's acceptance of his love, René had returned to his easel with some of his old zest.

Happiness removed at least one handicap—indifference; although there were still hours when the difficulties of his work would overcome him, and he would tell Leonore despairingly that it was futile to finish the canvas.

It was after a prolonged fit of such despair that Leonore, leaving the house one morning for the Conservatory, met René at the door.

“I hurried here,” he greeted her, “for fear you might already have gone to the *Cours*. Fidus has sent me with a message.”

“Then accompany me to the Conservatory. Is Fidus ill again?”

“Much more ill, I fear, than he will admit. He has never really got over his last attack. You know, Leonore, how unlike his old self he has been. He has grown so irritable and strange with me I scarcely recognise him for the same man. Indeed, his manner has stopped me every time that I have started to tell him of our love. It seems a lack of friendship not to confide in him, yet I feel my happiness to be such a jarring contrast with his lonely and embittered life.”

“There is scarcely need to tell him yet, René.”

“Perhaps not,” he returned; “yet my impulse is to tell him—to tell all the world. What I have come to say is that Fidus is in no condition to go on with his work; he needs complete rest and change of scene. So I suggested that he ask you to assume the management of the *cabaret*, while I take him away to Geneva for a few weeks.”

"I shall willingly take charge of the *cabaret*. But is it necessary for you to go with Fidus?"

"Yes, I ought to accompany him, Leonore. He is a man to whom idleness is almost an affliction. He will pine after his Paris interests, be depressed without any companionship; and that will counteract the effects of the change. I shall miss you—you know that; but Fidus has been such a faithful old friend that I am glad to make the sacrifice. You agree with me, Leonore?" He added with a smile: "And when we reach Geneva I shall tell him about our engagement. And we shall spend our time talking of you—always of you."

Leonore was silent. At last she said:

"So, then, you have given up the idea of finishing the 'Sphinx' for this year's Salon?"

"The picture?" and René sighed. "Alas! do not let us speak of the picture, Leonore. I should never have begun it. It was folly for me to undertake such an ambitious piece of work. Success in art is not for me, I fear. You think far too highly of the picture."

"And you—you think far too little of it," Leonore returned, trying to control her vexation. "You grow discouraged without cause. That is why success in art seems 'not for you.' Take heart; finish the 'Sphinx' as you planned, and you will have done a great picture!"

"But how can I?" he answered hopelessly. "There is so much to do—I can never complete it in time for the Salon."

“Certainly not, if you abandon it to go away with Fidus.”

“But Fidus is ill, Leonore. Would you have me neglect the man to whom I owe everything—who has been like a brother?”

“And I?” she cried. “Am I nothing to you, then? Do you not owe it to me to finish the picture in which I take so much pride—the picture that brought us together, that is almost a part of our lives? Ah!”—and she made a gesture of impatience—“it is inconceivable that you should treat me so. It is like a lack of love—your indifference to the picture into which all my feelings, my ambition for you, my passion for your success, have entered!”

“You care so much for the picture, Leonore?”

“I care for you, René; and in caring for you I care for all that concerns you. I want you to be a great artist!”

Her vibrating voice, the colour that vexation had called to her cheeks thrilled René as a proof of her love; and he answered with the light of new courage in his eyes:

“Forgive me, Leonore; I am wrong; I should not let my depression conquer me. I promise to finish the ‘Sphinx’ instead of taking the trip with Fidus. Fidus is generous—he will understand,” he added with a certain wistfulness. “He, too, protested against me leaving my work.”

“No, do not give up the plan altogether, René,” Leonore said quickly. “I do not wish you to neglect

Fidus. Accompany him to Geneva; see that he is comfortably installed there; and then return to Paris and your work. This will please him, without too great a sacrifice of your time. You see, I also would be generous—I bid you leave me!" And her brilliant smile caressed him.

They had reached the Conservatory, and were pacing slowly the paved enclosure famed for its little tragedies and comedies of love played in earnest by those whose art is to take illusions seriously. Strains of music reached them. A heavy *basso* bombarded the air; high female notes rocketed from the neighbouring windows.

Leonore paused at the foot of the stairs and held out her hand.

"You have made me very happy, René," she said.

"Leonore," he answered with emotion, "what this walk has meant to me, what every moment with you means to my life!"

Paul Mounet came up as they stood there.

"*Bonjour*, Monsieur Bouchard," he said, saluting the pair. "You have brought me my *tragédienne*, I see. Will you not attend my class?" Mounet had guessed an interrupted courtship. "It will not be Mademoiselle's turn to-day, unfortunately; but I think that you will be interested in a scene we are studying. Have you ever seen *Denise*?" he asked of Leonore. "No? It is a great play, a great *rôle*—one you must act some time. The

heroine is a noble woman, all disinterestedness and candour: characteristics none too common these days—on the stage or off.”

René and Leonore found seats at the rear of the class-room.

Paul Mounet called upon the actress who was studying *Denise* to mount the platform.

She began her scene, but after a moment her professor interrupted her with an exclamation of disappointment.

“That is not it, mademoiselle! Do you not *feel* the situation? Denise is sacrificing herself. To save the sister of the man she loves, she makes this confession of her fall—a confession that she knows will destroy her happiness, her life. The confession is heroic; every word of it breaks her heart. But she loves that man too much to deceive him whatever the consequences may be. To be worthy of him she must give him up!”

The pupil began afresh, and now, kindled by Mounet’s explanations, she acted the part with extraordinary grasp.

Denise’s confession of her former fault to the man she now loves made a profound impression on Leonore. This story of a woman who, about to find happiness in love, is confronted with a spectre of a past, so resembled her own case that Leonore was shaken out of the moral apathy that had so long possessed her. She had well-nigh forgot

George Burton; he had been crowded from her heart by the interests of her life. It seemed to her that Fate took this auspicious moment in her career to force on her the very problem that Denise so nobly met. The voice of the play seemed to speak to her own slumbering soul.

The scene proceeded; the actress mounted in emotional power, until Leonore felt an almost unendurable tug of conscience. Her blood beat round the usurping thought of her past weakness. The prudent self-seeker of an hour before, disintegrated by the scene, melted into tears.

Rene watched Leonore. Her flowing tears thrilled him, though he knew not from what source they came. The lover's sympathy told him that Leonore's emotion was not the artist's tribute to art, but something that wrung the afflicted woman in her. And never to the simplicity of René's senses had Leonore appeared so beautiful as now when real emotion dominated her.

When the class-room emptied and they were alone, Leonore, with a despairing exclamation, sprang from her seat.

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!"

"Leonore!"

Rene had risen likewise to his feet, and was regarding her with troubled wonder.

"My friend, leave me!"

"What is it, Leonore?"

She continued to weep, her hands clasped upon her eyes.

“Has *Denise* affected you so?”

She wept on, half-turned from him, paying no heed to the tender questionings.

René sank on his knees beside her, moved by a worshipful instinct.

“Listen to me, Leonore, and do not weep so,” he implored. “I love you!”

Her silence disquieted him more and more. He rose from his knees; drew her hands away from her face, stroked them; called her endearing names.

“Leonore!” he whispered gently, with lips against her cheek.

She yielded to his embraces for a moment. Then brusquely she thrust him away; confronting him wide-eyed and pale, as she demanded:

“Tell me—the scene we have just heard—what do you think of it, René? What is your opinion of Denise?”

“My opinion of Denise?” he stammered. “I don’t understand.”

Then, as with parted lips she still awaited an answer, he said:

“What is Denise to you, Leonore?”

“To me?” she echoed. “What, René, would you think if I told you, that, like Denise—I—with less excuse than Denise—that I——” A table stood near her, and as she leaned on it her arm shook convulsively; she threw back her head, the eyebrows

arching over closed lids, from which tears still ran. "Ah, how unhappy, how unhappy I am!"

"That you, like Denise——?"

"Yes, I, René, I"—— She fixed imploring eyes on his still questioning face. "René!" And she swayed as if about to fall.

René started forward to her aid; and into his stretched arms Leonore threw herself in complete abandon.

"Can you forgive?" she sobbed.

His caresses told her that his love swept it away as something that mattered not. And taking his face between her hands she sealed her gratitude in a long kiss.

"Then you love me that much, René? I misjudged; I did not think you loved me that much. You see, René"—Leonore was seated now, and he was half-kneeling by her side with arms around her—"You see, René, that I told you the truth. I am not the woman you imagined—the one you have in your heart. Ah, if I had become your wife with this memory of my youth—my blind, unthinking youth—unconfessed, unpardoned, René, that would have been a wrong for which I never could have forgiven myself."

He pressed her to him more tenderly; and she went on:

"No, no; I have had to tell you—and I thought—yes, I thought—I was giving up my happiness. And the picture of our love thus ended, of our being

strangers to each other now, almost broke my heart.”

“But I love you, Leonore. How can anything matter?”

Her lips quivered into a twisted, tearful smile.

“Your love, René, is stronger than I dared to hope. I can forget—since you refuse to remember, dear, dear René! I see it—yes, I see it in your eyes—that you forget already—that you love me as before. René, René, for those who love greatly, as we must love henceforth, there is no past. Love wipes out all pasts—as your love has wiped out mine.” And she let her transfigured face shine down upon him.

Leonore’s face enchanted René, completing the mastery that she exercised over him. All the joyousness of his young nature rose in response to that dazzling look. He got up, and, raising her to her feet, kissed her with extravagant delight.

“I love you always and in every way, Leonore—but I love you most when you smile. Come, we are going to smile much together!”

There was something very winning to Leonore in this speech, this air of René’s; but it dismissed their deeper mood.

“It is almost one o’clock,” she said, “and we must leave; there will be another class here.”

As they moved to the door René, stooping, picked up a book.

“Is this book yours?” he asked. “Ah! I see it is

Denise who has forgotten her *brochure*." And, taking a pencil from his pocket, he wrote something on the cover.

"Look!" he exclaimed, holding it up for her to read.

In his fine hand he had added a word, so that the title ran :

"*Merci, Denise !*"

"What a dear boy you are!" she said, giving his cheek a playful caress as they left the room.

It was a bright day in which the rigours of early spring had yielded to a smiling sun. René, after a visit to Fidus, stopped for Leonore at her apartment, proposing that they go out and dine in the Bois de Boulogne.

The Pavillon d'Armenonville was just opening for the season, and René and Leonore found the favoured resort well patronised.

They relished the animated scene which consorted so well with their own gay humour ; and they were loth to return to the city.

Leonore argued for a further drive in the Bois.

"But the *cabaret* ?" René objected.

"No ; this must be a holiday. I am too happy to-day to be a Red Sphinx."

"And Fidus ? He will be expecting you."

"No, he won't," she laughed. "I sent him word I shouldn't recite to-night."

"Oh, Leonore ! But I am glad you did." He

was like a boy in his exuberance. “We’ll pretend we are a young couple just from the *Mairie* making our *tour du Bois*.”

Fidus received Leonore’s *petit-bleu* late in the afternoon. She stated, without explanation, that she would not appear that night at the *cabaret*. The *chansonnier* had counted on Leonore for his main attraction, and he was thoroughly exasperated at the message.

“She knew I was not well—how inconsiderate of her!” he said to himself, as he prepared for the evening.

René did not, as was his custom, drop into the *cabaret*.

Then Fidus understood: Leonore and René were together.

He recited a poem in place of Leonore’s number. Fatigued by the exertion, he went, after the *cabaret* closed, for a stroll; and finally sought his favourite *café*, the “*Abbaye de Thélème*.”

From his seat by the window he could look out on the Place Pigalle, with the white façade of René’s *hôtel* opposite.

Fidus’s heart was filled with bitterness against the lovers. Never had he felt more miserable and lonely. All the irony of age pierced his breast, all the melancholy that comes to one with the sense of lost youth; he saw himself neglected, forgotten, a man who had outlived his right to claim any real happiness of fate. His genius had born only

harsh and unsavoury fruit. Deformed by nature, ridden by incurable disease, he had trodden his solitary path weighed down by almost intolerable suffering. He had raised the lid of life's casket only to find inside—derisive emptiness.

He knew, as he mused there—separated by his feelings from the noisy gaiety of the restaurant, deaf to the music filling the air with champagne-like ebullition—that he loved Leonore. It was jealousy that had caused his irritation in the studio when he had tossed down the volume he was reading and departed with the words, "Farewell, Ferdinand and Miranda—Caliban leaves you!" He had felt then like the uncouth and rancorous slave of Prospero's wand; and with sentiments more or less kin he had continued to brood in bitterness, watching the progress of René's courtship. Yes, he hated them both, the lovers; hated René with a sudden leaping blackness which obliterated all the fidelity and affection he had hitherto cherished for the young man, to whom he had been as elder brother. René had rescued him from the misery of his garret, where he lay ignored by all the world; René had succoured him in his direst need, had given him his fresh start in life, his present ease; yet he hated him, for he had robbed him of the woman he coveted. As he sat there, watching, waiting, Fidus cursed his friend, and felt that he would rejoice to see him lying dead at his feet.

Then having spent the feelings that welled in his soul by such ill thoughts, Fidus's mood changed. Memory after memory of René's devotion visited his mind. And, full of remorse, he reproached himself for begrudging his friend the happiness of Leonore's love—happiness that was the privilege of his youth.

On the square outside stood a time-stained marble fountain, the jetting spray of which flashed whitely in the blue, star-dotted night. He had often watched it from the windows of René's studio; and now to his melancholy mind came back the lines he had once written on that symbol of eternal youth. How the fountain mocked him with its low laughs out there in the darkness! It was singing with its gushing voice of the wonder and mystery of love. And somewhere now the hearts of Leonore and René echoed it. Yes; let them love while the blood in their veins was full, while beauty and freshness was theirs. How soon time would track them on their way, rob them of that gift which made existence worth its pain! Let them love; for all too soon must fall age's shadow, the mildew of time, the sadness that was his to-night!

The rumble of wheels jarred upon his musings. A carriage stopped in front of René Bouchard's *hôtel*. Fidus could not see who alighted; but a few moments later the broad, dark window of the *atelier* reddened into life.

Fidus's kinder thoughts of René were dissipated

at the sight. An inrush of jealousy again flooded his breast.

They were together—he was alone!

After a while the *atelier* window was thrown open, and a woman's figure appeared for a moment.

All possible doubt was now removed from his mind: Leonore was there. Still more poignant emotions pierced the *chansonnier's* blood. He started up as if to confront their forgetful happiness with his misery. But the door opened; René and Leonore emerged.

Fidus watched them cross the square in the direction of the Place Vintimille.

At her door René bid farewell to his betrothed.

"What a day it has been!" he said. Then, as he embraced her, he whispered tenderly: "*Merci, Denise!*"

Light-hearted, dreaming of Leonore, Bouchard turned his steps home to the Place Pigalle. The dinner out at the Armenonville, the drive in the rich gloom of the Bois, their return to the city, past the spectral Arc de Triomphe, down the Champs - Elysées in the beauty of its budding *marronniers*, and then, in the studio, that half-hour of exquisite intimacy when Leonore at his urging had stopped to sip the glass of rare old cognac he had recommended after the drive: over these souvenirs René smiled joyously. It was late now. The alternate gas-jets had been thriftily put out, and the *Place* was black in shadow.

René was opening the gate of his *hôtel*, when a figure sprang upon him from the dark.

“She is your mistress!” cried a hoarse voice.

René tried to shake off his assailant.

“Fidus, are you mad? Let me go!”

“You cannot deny it!”

“I do deny it!”

Fidus’s grip did not relax.

“You lie!”

“It is the truth. I have never lied to you. Leonore is my *fiancée*.”

Fidus stumbled back against the iron fence. The paroxysm of rage had passed, and he would have fallen had René not steadied him.

“You are ill, my poor friend. Come in with me.”

Fidus refused with a vague gesture.

As he did so, he fainted; and René, with the aid of his servants, bore him into the house.

CHAPTER XIII

RENÉ'S PICTURE

IT was not for several days after his faint at Bouchard's gate that Fidus was able to take the journey to Geneva which his friend had proposed. Despite his promise, René, who had not told Leonore of Fidus's fit of jealous fury, deemed it inadvisable to leave the invalid as soon as he had intended. In his letter from Geneva, mentioning the reason of his delay, he informed her by what train she might expect him.

Leonore decided to go to the Gare de Lyons and meet her lover.

It was towards six in the evening, and while waiting for the P.L.M. Express to arrive Leonore paced the platform impatiently. She was eager for René's return, not only because of the picture, but also because she had now persuaded herself that she was really in love with the young Frenchman. Her imagination had, ever since her confession in the Conservatory class-room, been active in investing Bouchard with all the qualities of the ideal suitor;

and during the days of his absence from her she had moved on emotional heights.

The train at last arrived. But René was not among those she saw descending from the crowded carriages. Leonore searched for him in the Octroi, pushing her way through the litter of luggage and the throng of brass-ticketed porters carrying trunks to cabs. Customs inspection was over. The last carriageful of travellers drove off.

René had not come! And Leonore, bitterly disappointed and possessed by forebodings, asked herself what had detained her lover. Was it merely that Fidus was too ill for René to leave him; or had the *chansonnier* succeeded in alienating him from her? René had told her that while they were together at Geneva he intended speaking to his friend of his engagement. She tried to picture to herself the scene that had taken place, what Fidus had said, how he had received the news. Was he more antagonistic to her than his reserved, yet not discourteous, treatment of her had led her to think? It was true the studio coaching had ceased; but that the *chansonnier's* ill-health accounted for. Yet he was no more the same; he avoided her; he took less interest in her acting, her success. Her fears made Leonore see Fidus's conduct in the most ominous light. René had promised to come—and he had not come. That meant that his friend had persuaded him to stay; had opposed his marriage to her, advocating the wisdom of René remaining in the

good graces of his family. Her lover was easily influenced, weak—yes, she knew him to be weak: he would linger on in Geneva, and not return to finish the picture on which so much depended!

Leonore took a homeward tram to Montmartre. But never had the Paris tramway system seemed so cumbersome. At the Place de la République, getting out in despair, she hailed a cab.

Leaning back on the seat, she broke into exasperated tears.

"He should have known I would go to the station, and have spared me such disappointment," she thought.

After a while she sat up, ashamed of her tears.

"How I must care for him!" was her reflection, as she wiped her eyes.

Having reached her apartment she demanded of the *bonne*:

"There has been no message for me, Marie?"

"No, madame."

"Nothing, nothing?"

She flung herself on the bed to rest before going to the *cabaret*.

The *bonne* came in to ask if her mistress wished dinner served.

"No, no; leave me alone!" was the impatient reply.

But her anxieties made repose impossible; and Leonore rose and dressed for the *cabaret*. She would dine out somewhere.

She entered a restaurant and ordered dinner.

But while waiting for it to appear, Leonore had an inspiration: she would go to René's *hôtel* and see if news had been received there. In her impatience to carry out this resolve she would not stop to eat. Calling a waiter, she paid the bill, and, to his astonishment, left the restaurant.

At the Place Pigalle the *concierge* told her that they had received a telegram, saying that Monsieur Bouchard would be in Paris early next morning.

She turned away.

"So he shows more consideration for his servants than for me!"

When she arrived at the *cabaret* a telegram was handed to her.

She read:

"Fidus better. Shall try to leave to-night."

Leonore crushed the paper in her hand.

"Fidus—always Fidus!"

Next morning found Leonore in an altered mood. Blaming herself for her doubts of René, she hurried to the Place Pigalle that she might be there in time to greet her lover on his arrival.

The *atelier* was dark. Groping her way to the windows, she threw them wide. Delicious morning air and sunshine poured in. The armful of flowers she had bought on crossing the *Place* she distributed among the vases.

Surveying the room to judge the effect of her

decoration, her eyes fixed on René's shrouded easel. She lifted the cloth and gazed long and thoughtfully at the "Sphinx."

The picture was about two-thirds completed. The detailed composition was there, but the colour was still in a crude stage: the canvas lacked its final tone, its nuances, the hundred fine touches of a well-realised work.

René had made many experiments before settling on his present treatment of the poem. A troubled multitude had gathered about the rocky steeps of Montmartre, crowned by the stately structure of the *Sacré-Cœur*, the white dome of which was streaked crimson with sacrificial gore dripping from the outstretched wings of a gigantic half-human figure. It was upon this threatening monster, with its uplifted paw, casting a sharp red silhouette on Paris, that the painter had laboured most enthusiastically. He had succeeded in giving the face an arresting power; for in this Leonore had provided inspiration as the model by her expressions studied for *Fidus's* poem. She had herself decided on the most effective of these for the picture; and she now gazed at the image of herself as René had faithfully delineated it. The countenance was full of an unearthly malignity, yet the human quality was not wholly lacking. It was still Leonore's face—Leonore's face with every possible evil of her soul called forth by strangely terrible, exaggerated conditions.

To Leonore's mind, untrained in detecting technical blemish, and caught rather by the literary suggestion of the picture than by its worth as a painting, the "Sphinx" appeared, under the stress of René's recent application, a work of no mean merit. In defiance of the *chansonnier's* slighting valuation, in defiance of the doubts that sometimes filled her as a reflex of the artist's own discouraged opinion, she saw the canvas occupying a prominent place in the coming Salon. She even pictured it winning something more than the facile *Mention Honorable*—a *Premier Prix*, perhaps!

She dropped the cloth, saying determinedly:

"He *shall* finish it!"

And now carriage wheels were heard in front of the house.

She sped to the window.

"René!" she called.

He looked up and saw his sweetheart waving a welcome to him with a spray of roses she still held in her hand.

René dashed boyishly up the stairs, exclaiming breathlessly, as he took her in his arms:

"Fidus was so much better, I could leave him after all! You got my telegram?"

"Yes, but too late. I had already gone to the station to meet the afternoon train."

"You had? I am so sorry. I could not come yesterday, poor Fidus was so miserable."

She gave a shrug of vexation.

"You think only of Fidus. Am I of no consequence? I came here to welcome you home, and, instead of saying you are glad to see me—you talk of Fidus. I hate the name!"

"Don't say that, Leonore!" René said soberly. "You don't know Fidus, or you would never speak unkindly of him. He had had such a tragic life—Oh, Leonore, *such* a life, so filled with shadow! The things he told me about himself at Geneva filled me with pity; and I have vowed that I should show myself doubly the friend I have been to him. And when he learned of our betrothal—he touched me by his generous pleasure in my happiness."

"I see that he is more to you than I am," she retorted. "Yet you say you love me!"

"And do you doubt it, Leonore?" he said a little sadly. He drew her to a seat beside him on the divan. "Come, Leonore, we *mustn't* quarrel."

"Forgive me, René," she said, yielding to his tender caresses. "I oughtn't to have spoken like that. But you make me jealous with your praises of Fidus. Don't you know when two people love there should be nobody in the world except themselves—not even a Fidus? And you haven't once said that you love me!"

"Need I say it, Leonore?" He had his arm round her, and as she leaned against him he pushed back from her temples her abundant blond hair. "Your beautiful hair," he murmured; "I love to touch it."

"If you love my hair, then I won't be sorry any more that it isn't black. Your 'Tragic Muse' ought to have dark hair—dark as Tragedy itself!"

"But you are not my 'Tragic Muse'; you are the woman I worship, Leonore. And its brightness is a symbol of all the brightness you bring into my life."

"If that were true!"

"But it *is* true," he said dreamily, his lips against her cheek. "You are like a great light shining on me out of the future. I am so proud of you—of the woman that is for me alone, of the actress whose genius all the world will some day know!" His face glowed with sentiment. "My famous wife to be!"

"Your wife—it is but a hope!"

"And why 'but a hope'?"

"So much depends on your freedom to marry me," she answered mournfully. "Your parents—they want you to marry in the *grand monde*. Will they ever accept an actress as a daughter-in-law when they have chosen for you—a woman of title!"

"And what greater title than yours, Leonore—the title of talent? You know that I shall never marry any one but you. My parents will not even ask it when they know how much I love you—they *could* not ask it!"

"And you have not told them about me?"

A slight shadow came upon his face.

"Not yet; I am waiting for the right moment to tell them, Leonore. My mother has her prejudices; my father is old, and often irritable—he has never quite forgiven me for choosing art as a profession. He had such different plans for me—and I, his only son."

"But if you made a great name for yourself as a painter?"

"Yes, that would reconcile him, no doubt: he has succeeded himself in life, and his measure for all things is—success. We are *bourgeois*, Leonore; and my father has the feelings of his class. Art as art means nothing to him. He sees it as only a means to an end—the Salon, medals, a name in people's mouths. Life is a ladder that it is one's duty to climb, leaving behind the limitations to which one is born, the memory of one's humble origin, the people who consider you their equal: that is how my father feels. The true *bourgeois* at heart despises his class—his one ambition is to escape from it!" He sighed. "I am not like that. I do not care for the world or what it has to offer. Empty material honours do not tempt me; and so, you can understand—that I have not pleased my father."

"You can please him yet, René! You have only to finish your picture, and it will bring you fame. See!" And Leonore, rising, went to the easel and uncovered the canvas of "The Red Sphinx." "Look at your picture through my eyes—I who recognise

its merit. Behold it as it is ; and take courage. You must begin work on it to-day. There is no time to lose. You have promised me to finish it for the Salon !”

“And I shall keep my word, Leonore.” He had joined her ; and together they gazed in silence on the sanguinary judgment of Anarchy.

“Leonore,” René said, “do you know, sometimes I have regretted painting you as the Sphinx there in the picture. I hate to think of you with that terrible look eternally fixed on your face. At times it has given me a queer superstitious chill—as if it threatened my happiness. I should have painted you as you are—the loving woman, who has come into my life to crown it with joy. Yes, sometimes I have wished to destroy the picture !”

“How foolish to feel so, René !”

“And once I almost did destroy it. It was one night after I had gone to bed. I could not sleep for thinking of you ; and I came up to the studio to search for a book to distract my mind. It was full moon, and I had forgot to cover the picture, so the light shone upon it. The face of the Sphinx wore such terrible expression that it fairly frightened me. And often since I have dreamed of it, pursuing me as I wandered in darkness, fleeing, as it were, from some ill destiny——”

But Leonore stopped him with a kiss.

“My poor René !” she smiled. “You have been too much with Fidus. He has made you morbid.

Dreams, as old soothsayers affirm, are the falsehoods of life—the contrary of what is to be. Your midnight Sphinx foretells that good fortune awaits you!”

“I know it, Leonore,” he smiled. “My Sphinx was but a sleep of despair—from which your love has awakened me!”

CHAPTER XIV

THE BUBBLE REPUTATION

THE Salon had refused "The Red Sphinx"!

René was prepared for this disappointment, although, thanks to Leonore, he had kept up his courage until the final touches were laid on the canvas. He had laboured on determinedly, deaf to the artist's voice within him that told him the picture was doomed to rejection.

To Leonore, however, the fate of the picture was an unmitigated blow. She had done all in her power to ensure its success during the weeks of toil that had followed on her lover's return from Geneva. She had exercised every resource of her woman's wit to call out the best that was in the young artist; her smile had never failed, nor the well-chosen word by which she cheered him on his path; she had remained devotedly by his side day after day, even to the neglect of her Conservatory studies.

As the picture advanced, her confidence mounted. She had begun by hoping that the "Sphinx" might be a masterpiece; she ended by being convinced that it would be. And her strong faith in his

work had indeed helped to make the "Sphinx" a far more meritorious achievement than it otherwise would have been.

But the truth was, that René had undertaken a subject for which he was temperamentally unfit—for which his talents were unsuited. The value of his paintings had lain hitherto in their delicate colouring, in the graceful sentiment he infused into what he did. The present picture had demanded something different: it called for strength, a broad and vigorous treatment contrary to René's taste. Training under Fidus, who had been his best teacher, had made him a fairly accurate draughtsman; yet his knowledge of drawing fell below the demands of so elaborate a design. The "Sphinx" had been a mistake, destined from the first to failure.

Fidus, who had foreseen the probable outcome of the artistic venture, blamed himself for having permitted René to undertake it. He had, indeed, on many occasions felt strongly tempted to warn him, but had been withheld by other considerations. The artist had previously displayed such indifference to his art that the *chansonniér* had rejoiced over this exhibition of reawakened interest. The failure of the "Sphinx" was better than abandonment of brush and palette; and so he had waited, hoping that René, under the spur of new ambition, might surprise him by fresh capabilities. But as the picture progressed, this hope, Fidus saw, was destined not to be realised.

Anxious to console his friend, Fidus pointed out the merits of the painting, and dwelt on the notorious fallibility of Salon juries, as the rejection of many a masterly work served to prove. René should be comforted by this knowledge and undertake new projects, profiting by what he had learned through his struggles with the "Sphinx." But to Fidus's words of encouragement the young man only shook his head: he would never, he replied, return to his easel—his artistic career was at an end.

The *chansonnier* had come back to Paris from his sojourn in Switzerland much benefited in health. His treatment of René and Leonore had all the kindness of the days when he had spent his spare time in the studio reading out loud or coaching the actress in her Conservatory rôles. While alone he had fought out the battle with his passions; his love for Leonore had suffered a deep burial within his breast. Friendship with René had been re-established in the intimate talk they had had at Geneva, during which the older man had lifted the veil on his past life. René had been deeply affected by these tragic revelations, and his young sympathy for the other in his unhappy memories had caused him to vow, as he told Leonore on his return to Paris, that he would be doubly the friend he had been to Fidus.

The one subject that occupied the minds of all three was René's marriage. Marriage with

Leonore, the artist held, would amply compensate him for all other disappointments in life; and the *chansonnier*, seeing how deeply he was in love, did all in his power to sustain his friend in the hope that this might be. The rejection of the "Sphinx" had thrown a grave obstacle in the path of its realisation; and René looked forward with gloomy anticipations to the return of his parents from Vichy, where Bouchard *père* was taking the *cure*, when he must perform the task of asking their consent to his formal betrothal to Leonore.

The Bouchard couple had fixed their return for the day of the Salon *Vernissage*, when they planned to give a grand *fête* in honour of "The Red Sphinx," which they expected to find on exhibition and surrounded by admiring crowds. They had visited René's studio before their departure, and had been much impressed by the size and the elaborate character of the picture, although both at first had felt somewhat scandalised at the apparition of a monster threatening to obliterate the sacred edifice of Montmartre. But here Fidus, for whom the *restaurateur* had considerable respect, owing to his position in the art world, had come to the rescue of his young friend by assuring the worthy pair that originality in painting was an important factor of artistic success, and that their son should be commended for the imagination he had shown in the work; and so, after some demur, the visitors, whose taste in painting inclined towards the fluttering

Loves of Bougoureau and the photographic fidelity of Bonnat portraiture, were won over, and even felt pride in the daring spirit René displayed with his brush.

René had seized on the auspicious moment to speak to his mother of Leonore, telling her of the fame she had already acquired as an actress, of the brilliant future Fidus prophesied for her. Although at the word "actress" Madame Bouchard took instant alarm, yet, somewhat moved by René's eloquence and the assurances that he gave her regarding the exceptional character of Leonore herself—a *grande tragédienne* dedicated to the highest classic art—she lent a more favourable ear to his story than he had expected. All, however, depended on Bouchard Senior. If René could persuade his father to listen, then, well and good; she would not oppose the match. "Best wait," was her counsel, "until the 'Sphinx' hangs in the Salon, and then approach your father. When he sees you a great artist, recognised by all the world, he will perhaps be disposed to consider your *mésalliance* with this *Américaine*." René had followed up his advantage by writing to his mother at Vichy, imploring her to prepare his father, to exercise her persuasions; but to his eager epistles the good lady reiterated her counsel of "patience," and "wait until after the Salon opens."

But now that the "Sphinx" was ignominiously returned to its owner, these brighter hopes were

dissipated; and René had to face the discouraging situation of a father disappointed in his son's abilities, and demanding as his right René's nuptials with some one in the *grand monde* whose social prominence would throw lustre on the Bouchard millions. René was full of despair. Uncertainty was, however, harder to bear than knowledge of the worst; and so the lover resolved that when his parents came back to Paris he would end suspense by boldly asking for the consent of his family to his marriage with Leonore.

Leonore shared René's depression, which the young man had been unable wholly to conceal from her. The opposition to her union with René humiliated her. The thought that a purse-proud *bourgeois*, a mere pastry-cook, should deem her unworthy of entering his family seemed to her an insult of the most unwarrantable order; and she had difficulty in exercising sufficient self-control not to wound René by the expression of such feelings. It was only by the reflection that her lover's attitude towards her had been always an almost humble one, that he paid her willingly the tribute she deemed hers as a woman and an actress, she retained command over herself in the conversations she had with René on the subject of their marriage. In some moods she heartily repented yielding to the artist's love, and would have doubtless demanded her liberty; but the vision of the Montmartre theatre, where she was to have undisputed sway, floated before her eyes, and served to allay the smart of offended pride.

The position in which she was placed offered, in truth, some excuse for the coldness towards her suitor which at times came over Leonore. It was almost inevitable that one of her nature should visit vicariously on René the resentment she experienced against his parents who failed to value her according to her deserts. It was not the best side of her character which occasionally got the uppermost ; and seeking justification for her irritation with the young man, she sometimes asked herself if René had shown the requisite amount of pains, in painting his picture, that the occasion had demanded. How often men had triumphantly surmounted greater difficulties than had been his, under the incitement of winning a woman's hand ! Did René love her to the extent that he vowed ; or had his feelings been merely the product of momentary emotions ? There had been the touch of the hysterical in his earlier protestations of affection. It was his weakness rather than his strength that had won her the night he had prevailed upon her to accept him. And was his weakness proof against the obstacles to love ? But these thoughts were driven away often by René's frequent display of frank adoration ; and, moved by his lovely appeals, Leonore again rewarded her *fiancé* with smiles and tender words, showing the captivating woman of early courtship.

It was varnishing day at the Salon, and René had invited Fidus and Leonore to lunch with him at his *hôtel*. The party was hardly a gay one ; the three

were thinking of the *Vernissage* at the Grand Palais, although no allusion was made to it.

After lunch the *chansonnier* excused himself, saying he must seek some rest in preparation for a recitation that he was going to give that night at the Trocadéro.

"Then we shall not see you until to-morrow?" René asked.

"No, I shall be late getting home. Mounet-Sully and many other artists are to figure in the programme; it will be a long one, and my poem is about the last to come."

"You will be sure to stop in to-morrow? I shall want to see you after my interview with my father."

The Bouchards had arrived in Paris from Vichy the day previous, and René had decided to speak to his father at once about his marriage to Leonore.

When Fidus had departed, René began idly sketching. It was a design for a book-plate for Leonore, representing the reclining figure of a woman who gazed in a glass held up by a nude youth in cothurns. The motto, "To hold the mirror up to Nature," had been suggested to him by a conversation which had once taken place at the *atelier* over the Players' Scene in *Hamlet*.

"That is very good," Leonore commented, as she leaned an elbow on his chair.

"You thought that about 'The Red Sphinx.'"

His drooping spirits touched her.

"You are so disappointed?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, shrugging, "for your sake. You know I never was very confident. But what does it matter, Leonore?" He threw aside his pencil and encircled her waist. "I have you—your success will suffice for both of us. Nobody doubts *your* talent!"

His evident depression made her apprehensive, lest he lack courage to brave his father's almost certain displeasure that night when he pled his lover's cause.

"To think that your parents should be so difficult about your marriage!" she said with springing bitterness. "Mine is not a pleasant position, René. I suffer under the humiliation of all this—I cannot help it."

"Why do you make so much of my parents' feelings, Leonore? Nothing can affect the fact that we love each other. I shall marry you despite my family, despite all. But it will not come to that. My father is growing old, and he has the prejudices of age. When he knows you, he will like you, and give his consent."

Leonore leaned against her lover, with her eyes darkly musing. Sudden feelings of foreboding seized her regarding the outcome of the critical issue that awaited René and herself as lovers. Did she truly wish this marriage to take place? Why not retreat, she mused, before it was too late—before René ventured so much for her sake? Were not the very difficulties in the path of their union a

warning. What wrong was she about to do René—what wrong did she do her own nature?

"What is it, Leonore?" he asked, seeing her distraught mood. "Think no more of my parents. I love you, and nothing can change me."

"But I do not wish to be the cause of your unhappiness."

"You will be the cause of my happiness!"

"But what can I give you, René, in return—you who are ready to sacrifice so much for me?"

"You have given me your love—I want nothing else!"

The time arrived for him to go to his father's home.

"Come," he said, as he prepared to start, "I want you to go with me as far as the house. To-night I must win you for my wife. And I shall win. Give me the kiss, Leonore, that will make success doubly sure."

He had dropped on one knee, gathering her to him in an ardent embrace. Leonore, leaning, kissed him on his lids with a sudden welling tenderness. René received the kiss like a young knight on whom his mistress had fastened the gage of love.

They had driven as far as the corner of the Parc Monceau, near which stood the Bouchards' home. Here, telling the coachman to stop, René took leave of Leonore.

"You will meet me to-night without fail?"

They had agreed upon a rendezvous at a little wine - shop, owned by a former servant of the Bouchard family, near the Saint Augustin Church.

"Yes," she answered ; "at eleven, without fail."

He looked at her with all his love in his earnest eyes.

"Good-bye, then," he said. "Never mind what happens, you are mine, Leonore—mine now, mine always!"

"Yes, yours now, yours always, René."

Her eyes followed his slight figure until the entrance of the *porte-cochère*. Here, pausing, he turned and waved to her.

"René!" started in a half-cry from her lips.

She would have called him back ; but he had passed under the arch, out of sight. And with a strange pang at her heart, Leonore turned away.

CHAPTER XV

THE VOICE OF THE PAST

LEONORE dismissed the cab and walked on down the Boulevard Malesherbes in the fallen twilight. As she passed the Saint Augustin Church, she glanced at the clock dial, and saw that it was just half-past six. It would be almost five hours, then, before she would see her lover, and learn what had resulted from the parental interview. She debated how she had best pass the time. It was not one of the nights on which she recited at the *cabaret*, so she must invent her occupation. Would it not be best, with so much provocation for anxious thought, to seek forgetfulness at some public spectacle? She paused before a Colonne Morris and studied the red, blue and yellow posters. Yes, there was *Ruy Blas* at the Français, with Paul Mounet and his famed brother in the cast—she would enjoy that! Only the scene which most interested her—that wherein her teacher had his magnificent opportunity—did not come until the end of the play; and if she waited for this, she would be too late for the appointment with René. The Odéon bill announced a modern drama, *Château Historique*

—one of the successes of the season ; she had seen it, however, and she thought she hardly wished to witness another performance. After all, was it the theatre that she cared for to-night? Music best suited her mood—she might go to the *Concert Rouge* across the river.

As she was turning away some one pressed against her. It was an old man, with red polka-dotted butterfly tie, whiskers combed *à la Blowitz*, check suit and fawn-coloured spats. He said insinuatingly : “Mademoiselle wishes to go to the theatre? If Mademoiselle would permit me——” And he bowed with the seasoned graces of the *vieux marcheur*. Leonore hastily moved on. The gallant followed her down the Boulevard Haussmann, which she crossed, putting between her and her pursuer the tide of traffic which, at this hour, is always swollen. She entered the little Rue Vignon, which led her to the Grands Boulevards.

On the Boulevard des Capucines Leonore found just what her feelings demanded—lights and movement, those Paris opiates for harassing thoughts. Twilight slowly deepened, and through an enchanted violet film sparkled myriad electric arcs, unhealthy orchid bloom along the path of feverish city life ; the *café* terraces were overflowing with patronage of the “green hour”—*le cinq à sept* ; the air was surcharged with vivacity. At the Grand Café she caught the wild strains of the popular *Valse Bleue* played by a pink-coated Magyar band—music that caressed

the enervated phallus-worshippers seated over their glasses of opal-coloured absinthe. She passed on by the Café de la Paix, where countless compatriot faces, full of imbecile languor, expressed dull content in so-called *consommations Américaines* supplied by suave polyglot waiters; Leonore smiled a little, surmising how altogether Parisian these idlers fancied themselves.

Crossing the Place de l'Opera, she found the throng even denser. She was fairly in the vein for the boulevards now; the bustle, the sharp newsboy cries, the brilliant quality of it all acted upon her like a tonic. She slackened her pace, permitting herself to taste in more leisurely fashion the vivacity of the parade. With curiosity of her sex, Leonore surveyed the gaily-toileted *demi-mondaines* moving through the crowd in search of facile prey. She stepped aside to let go by a procession of Arabs from Algiers, one of whom, a man of magnificent physique, wearing costly robes and spotless turban, looked at her and smiled.

On reaching the Café Américaine, Leonore was stayed by a scene of bright commotion. Some men and women were leaving the terrace to get into a luxurious Mercédès, drawn up in front of the *café*; they were bound for the Bois. Pedestrians had gathered about to watch, attracted by the striking attire and high voices. One of the party was the little actress Yvonne; she was talking familiarly with another woman—a girl from Amsterdam, where

probably her blond complexion and coils of superb copper hair created less sensation than at Paris. Leonore glanced admiringly at the *Hollandaise*, whose beauty was heightened by her violet costume, and in doing so caught the eye of Mademoiselle Yvonne, who, leaning forward, wafted a gay greeting. Little Yvonne—and in such company!

Leonore hastened on. She regretted that she had come on the boulevards, and was anxious to escape their tumultuous crowds which held so much insult to decency. The first side street was the Rue Lafitte, at the far end of which she caught a glimpse of the Sacré-Cœur, looming on the Montmartre steeps—the same view which had so struck her on that half-forgotten first day in Paris. Absorbed in serious thoughts evoked by the spectral white dome, Leonore did not hear her name called until it was repeated several times. A young man started up in joyful surprise from one of the *café* tables at the corner.

“Leonore!”

This time she paused.

It was George Burton who hastened after her.

The idea that some time she might meet George Burton in Paris had, curiously enough, never occurred to Leonore’s mind. So final had their parting at Cherbourg seemed, that she looked upon her former lover as one for ever shut out of her life. Now that the unforeseen had happened, she found herself shaking hands with him without embarrassment.

The first words of greeting exchanged, they walked on down the Rue Lafitte. Leonore's eyes were still directed towards the dome of the Sacré-Cœur, fading to a film in the twilight of the long spring day; she did not observe with what interest George Burton was studying her. On whatever changes he noted in her appearance he discreetly made no comment. He walked by her side with his long, leisurely stride, that somehow expressed more than other more conspicuous marks of character what George Burton was, what he was born to, what was to be his soft future fate. London tailors had given his figure something of that well-turned look of the high-bred Englishman. In his lapel was a bunch of gardenias, fastened there by charming hands at the elegant florist Lachaume's on the Rue Royale. He had lost something of his youthfulness, however, and his face showed traces of a life of pleasure. Leonore had never seen him more contented, more serenely full of the enjoyment of living; and as she felt the atmosphere of this he unconsciously dispensed, a slight sensation of pique stole upon her. Evidently George Burton had not wasted, not fallen into melancholy, because of their separation. So it was with an indifferent air that she answered his enquiry whither she bent her steps; saying that she had wearied of the boulevards, after seeking for distraction there until time to keep an appointment with a friend.

"You are engaged for dinner, then?"

"No; it is much worse than that," she answered. Then, seeing that he smiled: "I mean that I have at least three or four hours to kill."

"Then why not kill them with me?"

"No, I can scarcely do that," she said quickly, embarrassed, thinking that he might construe the unhappy phrasing as an invitation to remain with him. "I mean that it is growing late—that I should be returning home." Leonore had no intention of seeking the dullness of her rooms; but it was a plausible subterfuge for leaving him.

"If your engagement is not for several hours, why not dine with me? Come!" He spoke as if the matter were settled. "Where shall we go? To Bouchard's?"

Leonore cast him an indignant glance. Then she remembered that George Burton could know nothing about her relations with René; her expression changed, and she said:

"No, not there—I do not want to go there!"

"I thought that Bouchard's was the best restaurant in Paris—it used to be. Has it run down?" he asked, with the *gourmet's* anxiety.

"No; but I don't care to go there. All these boulevard places are so stuffy, and it's warm to-night."

"Then suppose that we go to Saint-Germain—to the 'Henri IV.?' " he suggested; "that's cool, and the terrace will be jolly to-night."

"Saint - Germain - en - Laye? But that is so far! Remember, I must be back in town by eleven."

"There's plenty of time for that," Burton returned with a laugh. "How French you have become, Leonore, talking about Saint German being 'so far'! We can take this cab to the Gare Saint-Lazare; and if we happen to catch a train, we shall be out there in less than an hour."

Carried along on the brisk current of George Burton's talk, Leonore had no time to reflect upon the incongruity of the situation. The unexpectedness of the encounter had surprised her into accepting his invitation; he had treated it so much as a matter of course that the past was to be ignored that Leonore found herself acquiescing with equal naturalness. She had never ceased to resent the Burtons' treatment of her at Cherbourg; but her resentment against her lover, which had been more lingering than her love, dispersed like mist before George's smiling good-humour. As he showed neither regret nor memory, so would she display a like indifference towards the past.

After having committed herself in hasty fashion to this excursion, Leonore, seated beside Burton in the train, experienced regret. Why had she committed such a foolish and unbecoming act? She wondered what René would think of her if he saw her. Then it came to her consolingly that, after all, an evening spent in unsentimental friendship with her former lover would serve effectually to wipe out all memory of their past relations. The George Burton in whose

company she was on her way to Saint-Germain, with whom she was now chatting about old friends and old interests in America, was not the man who had figured in her confession to René Bouchard. The latter had obliterated the former. What death-blow, in truth, to any lingering emotions was their present attitude towards each other! Did it not prove how irrevivably dead were the old passionate issues between them? Having thus hastily justified her conduct to her conscience, Leonore recaptured her composure, which had been shaken by the unforeseen chancing upon Burton. In the relief that it brought her, she was able with less preoccupation to respond to Burton's remarks; and so engaged in superficial conversation they achieved the short journey to Saint-Germain.

It was at the "Henri IV." restaurant; and they lingered over their coffee. During dinner they had watched the myriad lights of the valley below come into being. The villages of Le Pecq and Le Vésinet seemed patches of golden carpet spread upon the dark. In the distance the sombre mass of the Mont Valérien stood forth against the dull yellowish-red glare that hung above Paris. The Tour Eiffel—giant pharos of the *Cité Lumière*—flashed its tricoloured rays in quick pulsations. Over the viaduct that arches the two arms of the Seine trains passed and repassed like glittering serpents. Occasional dots of light glinted along the drive-way of the great terrace

of Saint - Germain as carriages journeyed from the Park to the forest. Round them the shaded lamps of the restaurant tables—green, yellow, rose—completed with their brightness the enchantment of the scene.

“By Jove! this *is* a jolly spot; isn’t it, Leonore?” Burton commented. “No wonder that you’re content to live in Paris! I suppose that you’ll never come back to America now?”

“No; I’m hardly likely to go back.” Leonore’s voice had a certain wistfulness.

“Don’t you sometimes wish to?” he asked.

“Not often. But our talk this evening about places and people that I had almost forgot—— Yes, perhaps I feel rather sorry that I shall never go back,” she answered.

At the slight sigh Burton looked across at her enquiringly.

“Why shan’t you be able?” he demanded.

She hesitated.

“My work will keep me, for one thing. And then—I am going to be married.”

“An actor, I suppose?” Burton spoke with a little effort.

“No,” she answered; “he is an artist.”

“And do you not care to tell more?”

She did not reply. Her eyes were fixed on the bunch of roses she held in her hands.

“Why do you destroy my flowers?”

“Forgive me; I did not know what I was doing.” And constrainedly she fastened the roses in her belt.

"Come, let us go for a walk," he suggested.

Leaving the restaurant, they traversed the hotel courtyard and gained the old Palace Park. The moon, hidden under clouds during the earlier part of the evening, had emerged into view, transforming the valley that they had contemplated darkling and gem-strewn from the restaurant *pavillon*. The same valley was bright now with misty floods of moonlight, and one could discern the silvery lines of the Seine. Inside the Park there was a military band playing, and to avoid the crowds they paced along the terrace to the bend where begins a wonderful stretch, a mile and a half long. Down this terrace they continued their walk; on one side of them steep vineyards dropping to the river below; on the other, the moon-bleached driveway, that separated them from the forest with its overhanging black foliage.

At the point where the terrace juts out they paused, and their eyes absorbed the view. The night had grown quite clear; the clouds had been driven in toppling piles over in the direction of Marly, where flashes of lightning reddened the murky mass.

"Who is your *fiancé*?" Burton abruptly demanded.

"René Bouchard."

"Bouchard? The son of——"

"Yes," she said haughtily, "the son of the *restaurateur*. He is a painter."

Her air seemed a dismissal of the subject.

Oblivious of her companion, she leaned on the iron rail of the slope, with her eyes fixed on distant Paris.

With reviving sentiment, Burton observed the beauty of Leonore's expression. It seemed to him that her face had gathered strength, that more character was there than when he last saw it. Evidently Leonore had lived and felt, had sounded depths of experience since her coming to Paris; and at the thought he was pierced by emotional curiosity. What joys and sufferings, he asked himself musingly, had been hers since the days when he had filled her heart and satisfied her imagination? Had she loved since—did she love now? This Bouchard, son of the great *restaurateur*, was doubtless very rich. Was wealth, then, the attraction? Was it chance that he, heir to millions, had been succeeded by a French millionaire's son? Perhaps his mother had not been wrong in believing Leonore calculating.

He continued to watch the abstracted face. Burton recognised that this was not a girl with whom to have a boy's romantic love affair. This new Leonore was a woman with whom to live a dramatic episode. Since he had known her, Burton likewise had lived much. From being a rich youth of the usual pleasure-seeking type, he had ripened into a man not satisfied with facile vice. His nature craved deeper-tinged, more difficult passions; he had grown to search for elusive sensation; and he felt that

just as the Leonore he had courted on the *New York* contented the earlier man, the woman by his side was capable of giving him the experiences which his matured nature craved. Leonore had told him of her acting, and he wondered if it was the tragic actress in her that gave him this feeling. No, there was something in Leonore that hinted tragedy; there was tragedy in her blood.

Leonore's gaze was still fixed on the distant dome of the Montmartre Church; but finally she seemed to grow conscious of Burton's silent speculations.

"Can you make out the Sacré-Cœur?" she asked, breaking silence. "There"—indicating it—"further over to the left."

"Is that what you have been looking at so intently?"

"Yes," she said dreamily. "I was fancying I saw the Red Sphinx hovering over it with blood-dripping wings."

"What an odd idea!"

"It is a poem that I recite at Fidus's *cabaret*." And Leonore repeated the opening lines—the prelude where the poet describes his vision.

They continued their walk along the terrace.

"You are more devoted than ever to your art; aren't you?" he said. "You have never regretted choosing as you did at Cherbourg, then?"

She answered quickly:

"I certainly do not regret becoming an actress!"

"Yet you are giving it up now!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, in marrying. You will not continue reciting at that *cabaret*, surely?"

"Why should you think so?"

"In Cherbourg you thought that marriage would interfere with your art."

"René is most ambitious for me," she said, ignoring his allusion to the past. "He does not want me to give up my art. He intends to start a theatre for me, with Fidus as director."

This remark strengthened Burton's suspicion that the proposed marriage was one of convenience rather than of sentiment.

"Why," he said bluntly, "have you not asked me to do this?"

"I told you that I was going to marry Monsieur Bouchard!"

"Don't take offence, Leonore. I merely want you to know that I care for your success. I have always wanted to further your ambitions; and it would have gratified me very much had you come to me with this plan."

"But Monsieur Bouchard——"

"You love him, Leonore? Or is it your art, your career?"

"You ask me such a question!"

"I ask it because I do not believe you love this man!" he answered boldly; "because I think you are making a mistake. You care too much for your profession ever to marry!"

Burton argued from a selfish point of view. He had no intention of marrying Leonore Redway, yet he did not wish her excluded from his life by marriage to another. He talked on persuasively. Leonore listened with averted face. It was with a certain exultation that she felt George Burton veiled his love in thus protesting against her marriage.

They had covered almost the whole length of the terrace. Burton caught the sound of carriage wheels behind them. One of the "cabbies" stationed at the Park entrance, seeing the pair come out of the "Henri IV.", had followed them, scenting a liberal fare.

Burton proposed that they take the carriage and drive to the station by the forest way.

"But is there time?" she demurred. "You can get us to the railway station for the ten o'clock train without fail?" Leonore demanded of the coachman.

"You understand, *cocher*?" Burton added.

"*Bien, bien, monsieur; je comprends!*" replied the coachman, with a wink of intelligence that was lost on his patrons.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE FOREST OF SAINT-GERMAIN

THE forest of Saint-Germain is one of the lordliest of those vast royal domains that add so greatly to the natural riches of Northern France. Not as wild as that of Fontainebleau, nor as park-like as Marly or Meudon, Saint-Germain is wondrous for its lovely luxuriance of foliage. Fontainebleau is remembered for its giant moss-cushioned boles, its great grey rocks and wide spaces; while from Saint-Germain is brought back the recollection of a realm of leaves—endless vistas of leaves, leaf-laden branches intricately knit together in loom-like fashion. No boulders, open spaces rare, few noble trees, grand in their individual growth. But leaves everywhere, always leaves, and infinitely suffused with a luminous quality like imaginable hazy light of ocean depths. Leaves always stirring in symphonies, from the cool whisper of the summer breezes to the autumnal dirges of orchestral brass. Leaves that find a hundred tender tints in spring-time; that die an exquisite death, fluttering to the October ground in gem-matching hues, like fragments torn from some illumined missal.

Innumerable roads cross and recross under roofing branches, each road a cloister of consecrated silence. At intervals are circles, formed by the conjunction of six, eight, ten roads ; from these bright hubs the eye follows darkening spokes until they are lost in forest distances.

Along these roads, dewy now, and dappled with moonlight, George and Leonore were slowly driven. A dreaming quiet was about them. The horses' hoofs were barely audible in the soft, mossy mould. There had been several days of rain, and the roads were still sodden, so that the open carriage swayed badly in the deeply-defined ruts. Scarcely a word was exchanged between them. Leonore sat with one hand grasping the ledge of the vehicle to steady herself, while her eyes, avoiding her companion, searched woody depths. Her heart was crowded now with memory ; her senses were swept by a strange sadness. The presence of George Burton, the flooding moonlight, the murmuring of the surrounding forest which simulated ocean sounds, all combined to carry her back to shipboard, and the brief hour wherein she had loved and been loved by the man beside her.

Burton's gaze had fastened on Leonore's musing face. He was about to speak, when she laid an arresting touch on his arm.

A clear, silvery strain had broken from the neighbouring coverts.

"Hush !" she whispered ; "it is a nightingale !"

The carriage stopped short in the damp, redolent dusk; and they held their breath lest they disturb the flitting bird.

There was a pause, and again the musician broke forth into a brilliant trill, which was repeated a second and third time with increasing ecstasy. The warbling notes seemed to rain upon them from overhead.

With beating heart, Leonore listened, laid under a spell by the rapturous sound, which voiced the intoxication of youth, the enchantment of the forest solitude, the poetry of the senses. All familiar literature of love was invoked in her soul; her quick dramatic imagination was stirred into life; and she wandered in a world of dream-creation. Medea sought her potent herbs in the moon-whitened meads of Colchis; Isolde signalled for Tristan at the postern door; Juliet leaned across her orchard balcony. She felt rise in her breast the infinite longings of all the great heroines of romance, all those tendernesses of devotion and sacrifice, the tragic pain, the overmastering bliss, that find immortality in the mind of man. She tasted to the full that power which was hers, as actress, of living the exalted characters of poetry.

At last there was a stir of wings; the bird flitted to a more distant branch, and there repeated his *roulade* twice as in farewell; then silence fell on the listening forest.

As the carriage started again on its way, Burton

suddenly leaned towards his companion, and, in a whisper full of conflict, said in her ear:

"Leonore! Do you really love this Frenchman that you have promised to marry? Are you sure of yourself?"

She silenced him with a gesture, not looking.

To Burton the gesture seemed to voice the answer that she did not utter. Passionate feeling rose within him, evoked by the hope that Leonore responded to his emotions.

"Tell me," he hoarsely urged, yet not touching the hand so near his own, "tell me that you do not love him!"

At this she stirred nervously.

"What can it matter to you?"

"Leonore," Burton went on, "I was a fool to listen to my mother at Cherbourg. I should have come with you to Paris; I should have helped you there in the beginning."

"What can it matter now? It is too late."

"It is not too late. Why should it be too late? You are free!"

"I am not free!" Was there regret in that cry?

Burton seized her hand.

"Leonore!" he breathed against her cheek.

A lurch of the carriage almost thrust her into his arms; she disengaged herself.

"No, no!" she implored.

She leaned out of the carriage avoiding him, and with parted lips drank the cool night air. Her pulse

drummed in her ears, and it was with effort that she mastered her turbulent senses.

On the carriage jogged. They reached one of the circular spaces, passed through the open moonlight, and again plunged into wooded shadow, rich in mouldy odours.

The silence of the dew-wet forest was unbroken.

A little further on they came to cross-roads. There, by the roadside, a young couple sat who, not hearing or heedless of approaching wheels, were engaged in love-making. Instinctively Leonore drew back into the carriage. Burton received her in his embrace, pressing a kiss against her throat.

At this Leonore's conscience woke from daze. Wide-eyed, she sat up, in terrified realisation of what had happened. She would have flung herself from the carriage to escape her companion—and herself; but Burton held her back.

"The train!" she cried. "We are not going to the station! Coachman! Back to Saint-Germain—I must catch the train!"

The driver pulled up his team.

"You must not go, Leonore," Burton pleaded hoarsely. "You shall not!"

"You promised! I must!"

At the furious cry, he took out his watch and consulted it by the carriage lamp.

"It is just half after nine. Can we make the train, coachman?"

"Impossible, Monsieur, impossible! We are at least a league from the station!"

"I must make it! You promised!"

Again the furious cry, in which was all the indignant woman, all the tragic actress. Burton was thrilled by it.

"Try!—lash your horses!" he cried to the driver.

The horses started on a wild loping gait, the coachman muttering the while, as he cracked his whip: "What fools these foreigners, any way! They don't know their own minds. I thought monsieur——"

Burton tried to calm Leonore.

"We shall make the train," he said. "Never fear; there is still time. I never intended that you should miss it."

Leonore sat with lips compressed. She did not heed; and he could hear how sharply she drew her breath.

They rattled at last over the cobbles of the town. Now the station came to view. They could see the hands of the lighted clock-face—they grimly indicated ten o'clock. Ten minutes late!

Into the station they hastened, where the guard informed them that there was not another train for two hours.

"*Grand Dieu!*" Leonore broke into convulsive tears.

"Can I get a special train to Paris?" Burton asked the guard.

"A special train, monsieur?" The guard seemed stunned.

"Yes, yes; a special train to Paris!"

"Monsieur can have a special train by to-morrow noon."

"The fool!" Burton muttered, turning impatiently away.

A crowd of coachmen had gathered about.

"Who of you can take me to Paris in an hour?" Burton demanded.

"*Moi*, monsieur!" said a voice. "I have an automobile that does its sixty an hour."

"Good, my man! Is it ready?"

"At the door, monsieur!"

The automobile started off at a reckless speed; and they were soon down the hill and gliding along the river road in the direction of Paris.

Leonore's courage, now that they were on the way, seemed to revive. Less ungrateful feelings towards Burton took the place of her angry suspicion that he had planned to lose the train.

"You see, Leonore," he said, "that I am doing what you ask! You will keep your appointment."

"Yes, I must, I must," she dully reiterated.

"But you must tell him that you will not marry him!"

"Never!" she cried with sudden tenseness. "I intend to marry him!"

They relapsed into silence.

The automobile sped on. The situation made

conversation impossible; it would have seemed an insult to the grand issue at hand. Both were full of their own thoughts as they gazed out of their respective windows at the fleeting moonlit landscape. They passed clustered village roofs; there were glimpses of the Seine; visions of shaven lawns behind gilded railings and ornamental gates; old châteaux, their slate-tiled mansards shining to the moon.

Now the dwellings grew more frequent and town-like; they were in Courbevoie, a faubourg of Paris.

All at once the automobile came to a dead stop.

"What's the matter?" Burton called out to the *chauffeur*.

"*Une panne, monsieur!*"

With an oath Burton sprang out to investigate the trouble.

Leonore, waiting in an agony of apprehension, asked herself if this new delay was the hand of Fate.

Burton came to the window.

"We cannot go on," he said. "Get out, we are near Paris; we may be able to find another automobile."

Leonore obeyed without a word. Her stricken face showed the strain that she was enduring.

Her manner impressed Burton.

"We shall get something, be assured," he said in a determined voice. The passion to succeed in his purpose had taken him; he now felt as eager as Leonore to reach Paris in time. The fact that he was fighting for another man's happiness no longer counted

No automobile in sight.

A cab rumbled along a side street ; Burton hailed it, and they got in. Leonore and Burton struggled to restrain their impatience as the coachman lashed his poor old "Cocotte," in futile endeavour to accelerate its jogging gait.

Midnight struck as they reached the "Barrière."

"Too late," Leonore said.

"No ; we shall still be in time," was the answer. "He will surely wait for you. Here, on the Avenue de la Grande Armée, we can easily get another automobile."

As they traversed the Place de l'Etoile, an electric tram shot in front of them. The *chauffeur* had to put on the brakes so abruptly that Leonore was thrown forward by the shock. Burton caught her ; and at the same moment a man's face peered into the automobile. Seeing Leonore in her companion's embrace, the man sprang toward them with a wild cry. But before he could reach the automobile it had started again on its way, down the Avenue Friedland.

A moment more brought them to the place of Leonore's rendezvous.

The *marchand-de-vin* was putting up the shutters of his *café* as they arrived.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he exclaimed, recognising Leonore as she descended from the automobile, "Monsieur left half an hour ago. He despaired of your coming. I begged Monsieur to wait a little longer — but he was too excited to listen

to me. He was in such a state, mademoiselle! Ah, mademoiselle, all is not well with him. He was troubled when he came; and then, when mademoiselle did not arrive!—Oh, then, he was in despair!”

Leonore broke through his garrulence.

“But—he left nothing for me?—no message?”

“Ah yes, a letter. Monsieur wrote several letters which he tore up. Here is the one that he gave me.”

Leonore, seated at a table in the dimly-lighted wine-shop, read René's note. It was not a letter; it was rather a succession of half-coherent sentences. Leonore was addressed in terms of hysterical violence. Her failure to keep the appointment had created all a lover's doubts and jealousies. René began by telling her of his interview with his parents. He had pled the cause of their marriage in vain. His father had lent a deaf ear to his appeal. There had been an altercation, and high words had led to his expulsion from the family roof. He had gone to the rendezvous confident that he would receive consolation from Leonore—from her for whom parental love had been sacrificed.

“But you have not come, false one!” he wrote. “I see all now in its true light. Your recent coldness! The change in you when you learned of the obstacles to our marriage! You do not love me! You never have loved me!”

Harsher, more immoderate words, followed. René called Leonore mendacious, calculating, devoid of all

but sordid motives, without generosity or gratitude. She had never valued what Fidus had done for her—Fidus, to whom she owed her professional reputation. Ah, he should long ago have divined Leonore's true character! She had assumed the nobility of a Denise, when she had nothing in common with her but the sin!

"I believed you! I loved you! You played with me, and tried to estrange me from my friend! For such as you have I for ever broken the sacred ties of family! It is you who dash my ideal of womanhood to the dust! All is at an end between us! I go to seek Fidus—the only faithful soul that has ever loved me!"

The enormity of the letter was its excuse. The penmanship as well as the language showed under what stress of feeling the writer laboured. But Leonore was in no mood to do René justice. She felt only the sting of his insults. To reproach her for the confession she had made him at the Conservatory! To besmirch her thus for not keeping her appointment! To treat her as if she had thereby committed a heinous fault! The outrage of the letter mounted in her. She forgot her indiscretion in going to Saint-Germain; her wavering faith in the forest; she remembered only the torturing journey back to Paris, her desperate effort to keep the tryst.

Leonore, as she sat there, the letter in her hand, fixed her eyes on Burton. Propped against the

bar, he chatted with the *marchand-de-vin* over a drink, seemingly forgetful of the trouble he had caused. Her brows contracted in a frown as she watched ; a surge of bitterness filled her heart. Was it mere chance that George Burton had crossed her path at such a moment in her life ; or was she the sport of circumstance ? Ah ! fortune had planned that she should meet this almost forgotten lover. No one could escape one's past ; and she must pay for her mistake to the uttermost farthing. How cruel life was ! What irony lay at the heart of things !

The memory of the forest drive came back to her ; she seemed to hear again the nightingale's notes flooding the moonlight solitude. Under the spell of the exquisite music she had dared to dream of the wonder of life. She had glimpsed the transfigured heights of passion, felt the thrill of epic love. Yes, she had been caught up among the elect company of women whose brows wore the crown of exalted feeling. And now——

Leonore crushed the letter violently against her breast. What was the use of struggling any more against the mockeries of fate ? She had been true to René only to be repudiated, flung aside in scorn. Well, why not be what he thought her ? Her lip hardened ; her face took the reckless lines of one who has fought life in vain.

She rose, and saying imperiously to Burton, "Are you coming ?" went out to the waiting automobile.

"What are the orders of monsieur?" the *chauffeur* asked.

"To Maxim's," said Leonore in curt tones.

"Wouldn't you prefer the Café de Paris or the Maison Dorée?" Burton suggested.

"Is Maxim's too gay for you, then?"

"Maxim's let it be!" he answered with a shrug.
"I'm your man to-night!"

"Yes, you'll do," she answered. And she lightly kissed him.

CHAPTER XVII

ROSES OF THE HALLES

EVER since the restaurants in the neighbourhood of the Halles were authorised to remain open all night, they have been the resort of bohemians and pleasure-seekers who, having exhausted the resources of other parts of Paris, turn hither to terminate their revels at Baratte's, Le Chien qui Fume, and similar places, over the traditional plate of *soupe au fromage*. "*Aux Halles*" is the cry of the Latin Quarter student and his *grisette* after passing the evening at the Bal Bullier. Thither come the street girls who, having ineffectually trailed their skirts along the boulevards, seek lodging in default of supper.

Picturesque and animated during the day, the Halles by night is a sinister and dangerous quarter of Paris. As soon as the luminous face of Saint Eustache beams like a harvest moon on the gathered dark, filthy wretches, vagabonds, pickpockets, female decoys, all the human refuse of Paris, stalk the winding obscure streets, dodging the insufficient flare of the periodic gas-lamps; questionable alcohol dens begin to crowd, and the nocturnal life of the

Halles starts up. At the "Ange Gabriel," one of the popular dens, one finds a wild gathering. Drabs and costermongers go there to eat snails and drink hot wine; the upper room is filled with heroes of stabbing frays, blackmailers and pale girls whose carmined lips hold perpetual cigarettes; disquieting conversations take place in whisper, while poor devils scratch off on their violins favourite waltz tunes, the choruses of which are joined in by the general assembly.

And, meanwhile, in front of the Halles, in blue moonlight, the waggons of vegetable dealers are arriving from all sides—a continuous slow procession; and on the pavements pile up great pyramids of cabbages, carrots and turnips, all the seasonable vegetables and fruits of the country; the side-walks are carpeted with masses of carnations, jasmin and roses, that seem, by their exquisite odour, to purify the atmosphere of the Halles, laden with vice and crime: the early morning market is preparing.

It was almost daylight when George Burton and Leonore issued from Baratte's, where, seated on worn velvet, *banquettes*, in an atmosphere smelling of sawdust, they had listened over onion soup to a seedy orchestra, in the downstairs general room, in which they caught their reflections in mirrors that diamond rings had scrawled with loose couplets and "Julie," "Simone," "Suzanne," "Mercédès"—*soubriquets* of the female frequenters of the place.

It was the last of various resorts they had visited

that night in obedience to Leonore's inexperienced yet restless, exacting taste for excitement. They had gone to Maxim's, where they had found assembled the usual pleasure-seekers who sup on champagne and lobster salad at inflated prices. From Maxim's they had wandered to Montmartre night *cafés*. At Tabarin's they had watched the skirt-dancing and the characteristic patrons of the place: the most flashily-costumed and boldly-bared *demi-mondaines*; French and foreign *rastaouquières* and *croupiers* from Monte Carlo and Ostende; heavy English turfmen; bankers from Frankfort and Amsterdam, their portly paunches richly hung with solid gold watch-chains and fobs; *vieux marcheurs*, with monocle and crumpled shirt-front. Here Leonore had encountered her friend of the Cours Bassot, Mademoiselle Yvonne, still in the company of her associates of the previous afternoon when she had been seen entering the automobile in front of the Café Américaine. The friendliness of Leonore's greetings had astonished Yvonne, as did her presence at such a resort; and they had all entered into conversation, Burton acquiescing with what grace he could muster. He had never seen Leonore in her present humour. The feverish gaiety that possessed her, the recklessness of her laugh, her caprices in exploring nocturnal Paris, all seemed the manifestations not of Leonore, but of some other, far different woman. All remembrance of the past seemed dissipated by her new surroundings. Slower than she to emerge from the grave,

emotional mood that had dominated him in the Saint-Germain forest, Burton in the beginning was a little disconcerted at this transformation in Leonore. His man's nature was incapable of such sudden transition of sentiment. Although Leonore had told him of René's letter, the explanation had been vague; and her conduct intrigued him: he was unable to gauge the meaning of her gaiety—whether or not it expressed relief at her freedom from her engagement. It seemed to him clear that Leonore could never have deeply loved the young artist who had jilted her; and in her present abandon he read her tacit acceptance of his own love. Yet when he alluded to her change of sentiment, Leonore chagrined him by her flippancy, and had remained deaf to his entreaty that they leave places so riotous.

On making their exit from Baratte's, Burton and Leonore found the Place des Innocents and the narrow hide-and-seek streets of the Halles, such as Mondétour, La Pirouette, La Grande and La Petite Truanderie, encumbered with porters, merchants, housewives. Already bartering had begun, which, as in the Orient, was taking place on the side-walks and door-steps. The quarter was jammed with waggons, to the shafts of which were hitched great Normandy stallions, their muzzles buried in bags of feed. The scene was full of interest for Leonore, who saw the Halles now for the first time.

They wandered here and there, Leonore laughing, criticising everything. The side-ways were strewn

with vegetable leaves and packing-moss, and were sticky with snail shells, the carapace of lobsters, *débris* of fish. Buyers jostled each other, house-keepers, opulent owners of cook-shops, caterers with portly abdomens. Sharp trafficking filled the air with confusion of voices. They passed innumerable wine-shops, mere niches, where worn-out carriers, vegetable sellers, the big-hatted "strong men" of the Halles, were taking odorous absinthe and many-coloured liquors; hither merchants were come to seal some bargain perhaps tenaciously fought over. Before impromptu cook-shops—out-of-door counters—clustered women with turned-up aprons and bared arms, and blue-bloused men, who hastily swallowed smoking soup and tumblers of white wine. The air was permeated with smell of celery, mixed with that of coffee and of sausages spluttering in hot grease.

Finally they came to the flower market, which occupies the glass-roofed passage-way between two great iron structures where cheese and meat are sold. The parti-coloured squares of potted and cut flowers enchanted Leonore. She thought that never had she beheld such quantities, such ravishing varieties, of roses. At their approach eagerly soliciting vendors held up for inspection bunches of great budding La France roses, golden Maréchal Neils, the delicate Duchesse; called attention to the sheafs of hardy Burbon blooms, double-headed Paul Rouons, La Reine and the hundred-leaved Provençal roses; all kinds that the market afforded. Leonore exclaimed

in ecstasy at the wondrous masses, many-hued and of commingling odour. She caught up great bunches of the roses, and, as she pressed them to her breast, laughed like a child, mad with their colour and dewy perfume.

"More, more!" she cried insatiably, as Burton bought bunch after bunch for her.

"Monsieur and madame go, then, to the *Fête des Fleurs* to-day?" asked the merchants. And at Leonore's laughing nod they twined smilax about the wheels of their cab.

"And my hat?" said the jolly coachman. "No roses for *it*?"

Catching the white oiled-cloth beaver from his head, Leonore, with deft fingers, garlanded the crown with scarlet buds.

"There!" she exclaimed, sinking back with a contented smile.

"And where now?" Burton asked sulkily. He was fatigued and in ill-humour; the night's programme had been little to his taste, and Leonore's ingenious evasion of any love passages between them during the night's adventures had more and more incensed him. "Where shall we go now?"

"Where?" she echoed. "I don't care—anywhere!"

The cab started towards the river. The rose-laden carriage, as it made slow progress through the Halles, excited on all sides the comments and pleasantries of the market people.

On reaching the Rue de Rivoli they were stopped

by a *sergent-de-ville*, who told the coachman that he must either turn back or proceed towards the quays, as the Rue de Rivoli was blocked with huckster carts on their way home from market.

"Whither, O minion of the law, shall we bear our burden of flowers?" Leonore demanded in tone of melodrama.

"You can cross the bridge over by Notre-Dame, madame," the officer answered imperturbably, without humour. "Here the way is barred."

"Well, then, to Notre-Dame! Monsieur, we go to Mass!"

They reached the Parvis in front of the cathedral.

The hoary façade stood dark against the roseate light of dawn; all the world smelt of evanescent mist, which streamed to heaven like a censer swung in holy hands.

"Stop the carriage," Leonore bade; and she stood up in the carriage facing the cathedral's majesty.

"The sun will be rising soon," Burton commented. "See how red the sky is!"

"No, no." Leonore spoke in thrilling tones. "It is not the sun that you see rising; it is the Sphinx—the Red Sphinx! Look how it spreads its bloody wings over the church; and now—now its paw is lifted! It lifts its terrible paw to smite! Hail to thee, Red Sphinx, Spirit of the World's Unrest!"

And she recited Fidus's poem in consummate fashion, standing there in the carriage, letting fall from her arms the blood-red bloom of roses. George

Burton listened with astonishment ; it seemed to be another woman before him ; neither the woman of the Saint-Germain forest, nor yet the reveller who had since midnight dragged him from one pleasure haunt to another. Leonore was become her transfigured actress-self. The glory of the verses as she uttered them in her rich trained voice, seemed to obliterate, as with sweep of a sponge, the folly of the last few hours. As the golden orb of the sun mounted wide-rayed behind the old Gothic pile, dispelled the foul fogs of night, so poetry transformed Leonore, made her the creature of a divine exaltation.

Across the Square an old woman trundled her vegetable cart, where, amid ardent-coloured carrots, red apples, and turnips like great lumps of mother-of-pearl, lay a few meagre bunches of pinks and cornflowers. She clasped her wrinkled hands in admiration of the rose-laden carriage.

"Jésus-Maria, what flowers!" she exclaimed. "It is beautiful like a hearse!"

"Here, take some of them," Leonore smiled, holding out all her two hands could hold. "Sell them—and sell them dear; they are fresh from the Halles."

The dame was profuse in her thanks.

"Heaven bless you, kind gentleman, and you, madame! How beautiful they are! And I have just come from gazing on so sad a sight! Ah madame, the poor young man! Jésus-Maria! but life is grievous. So young and so handsome!"

"What have you seen?" Leonore asked.

"A young man that they have just carried to the Morgue."

"A suicide?" An indefinable dread crept over Leonore's heart as she put the question.

"Yes, a suicide, madame; and he so young!"

"And is it known who he is?"

"No, madame; the body was found only a few hours ago. So young——"

But Leonore had already told the coachman to drive to the Morgue.

About the entrance of the gloomy building a crowd of workmen, butcher-boys, bakers' apprentices, and other early risers were gathered, attracted by the rumour that there had been a new body placed behind the heavy plate-glass screen, there to await identification.

The arrival of the flower-betrapped vehicle containing Leonore and her companion, created a new sensation.

Fidus, who was coming down the steps, was struck, too, by the anomaly of the carriage like a carnival chariot standing in front of this sinister abode of death.

"Fidus!"

Leonore, pushing Burton aside, sprang from the cab.

Her agonised cry seemed to awaken the *chansonnier's* dazed senses into life; his stare became a look of recognition.

His lips stirred without uttering any sound; but the accusation of his pointing hand was eloquent.

He staggered and fell heavily.

Leonore heeded nothing. She thrust her way through the awed spectators towards the portals of the Morgue.

George Burton went to the aid of the stricken man.

"Monsieur has received a rude shock," remarked one of the Morgue attendants, as he helped him pick Fidus up. "A friend of his is inside; and now, *mon Dieu*, he looks ready for the window himself!"

A boy ventured the remark:

"It was when he saw the fine lady that he fell. That's what killed him; that's what brings trouble to us all—*les femmes*!" He walked off, proud of his little success.

Burton and the *gardien* placed Fidus in the cab among the roses.

It was at this moment that Leonore came out of the Morgue steps, her face old with misery. She dragged herself to where Burton stood.

But he ignored her and got into the carriage.

'George, you are not going to leave me here?' she begged piteously.

The coachman had been about to drive off; he hesitated.

Burton repeated his order:

"To the Hôtel-Dieu!"

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

"UNMERITED RESPONSIBILITIES"

MADemoiselle YVONNE, having twice called in vain on Leonore, had exchanged exciting confidences with the gossiping *concierge*, who was duly proud of the notoriety connected with her *locataire*.

"No," she assured Yvonne importantly, "Mademoiselle denies herself to all the world. Ah, if you knew how many people have been here! The journalists—from the great papers—those of the boulevard. There was a young man from the *Gil Blas*, very elegant—yellow shoes and silk hat—just like at a funeral—who offered me twenty francs for Mademoiselle's photograph. I gave him one of an *ancienne locataire*, who went off without paying her rent; it did as well, you know. Poor Mademoiselle! What a terrible affair! And the stories they tell! But you—you saw Mademoiselle the night of the tragedy? You knew the *Américain*—the *millardaire*?" And she asked Yvonne if all that the papers had said were true: the mad auto-

mobile race from Saint-Germain, the bacchanalian revel at night *cafés*, the fabulous sum squandered on flowers at the Halles. "And you knew Monsieur Bouchard also, did you not, mademoiselle?"

"Well—not *intimately*," faltered her visitor. "I—didn't exactly know him; but—he was *very* handsome!" Yvonne was unwilling to admit limitations to her connection with the much-talked-of catastrophe.

"Yes, was he not? *I* knew poor Monsieur Bouchard very well. He often came here. I always said a *malheur* would happen to him, he looked so sad."

When she was received by Leonore, Yvonne greeted her friend appropriately, with facile flow of tears.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "to see you in black! It is *too* terrible! But, after all, it's quite fetching on you, mademoiselle. You've suffered dreadfully, haven't you? What awful things the papers have been saying! Don't think that *I've* been gossiping, *ma chère*. Everybody asked me about seeing you at Tabarin's, you know. But I haven't told any one anything, except my old *bonne*—who doesn't count, of course; and it entertains her so to hear the news. She scarcely sees a soul, for her son's asleep all day—he works nights on the *Gaulois* or the *Matin*, I forget which."

"Ah, then, that is how it got into the papers Yvonne!"

“Do you think so?” her little friend gasped. “I cannot believe it—Jeanne is so discreet. But, anyway, *ma chère*, just think how it will make you known—what a splendid advertisement for you! Of course”—sighing—“it’s all *very* terrible. Poor Monsieur Fidus! You’ve heard what dreadful things that have been said about *him*? It’s a shame, too, and he still at the hospital! Monsieur Damart tried to see him, you know, but was refused admittance, because Fidus thought *you* had sent him. But it’s hard to say ‘No’ to Louis. Besides, the doctor at the Hôtel-Dieu is a friend of his. Louis says that Fidus is *very* ill. They hope to save his life, but,” she added cheerfully, “his reason will be gone.” Yvonne imparted her information in something of that spirit with which, as La Rochefoucauld reminds us, we bear the misfortunes of our best friends.

The gay chatterbox hurried off, convinced that she had fulfilled her mission of condolence with infinite tact.

After Yvonne had left, Leonore moved to the window and dejectedly looked out on the dreary little Place Vintimille. Her head rung with her visitor’s wild talk; and the news about Fidus set her heart to aching. All the morning it had rained, a steady downpour, and the tiresome stuccoed apartment houses opposite stared blankly down upon the Square, with its sappy trees and deserted benches.

The one bright note was Yvonne, lightly tripping

across the street in the gaiety of her *soubrette* attire : skirts held high with both hands, red morocco boots setting off well - turned ankles. A familiar - looking figure, wearing a wide felt hat and flowing black cravat, waited on the corner : it was Damart. As Yvonne approached, with a grand flourish of his hat, he came forward, his ruddy face -beaming a welcome. Leonore saw Yvonne tilt up her chin for her lover's kiss. Then, arm in arm, they passed out of sight. So the quarrel between them had been made up !

Leonore wearily dropped the curtain on this picture of other people's happiness, and turned to her room, already dark in the ashen-hued evening light. How different, she mused, was her lot from that of the care-free couple she had just watched ! For them existence had still its illusions ; while with her dreams of youth were departed. She saw herself sitting, veiled in tears, among heart-ruins. Alas ! she lived drama as well as acted it for the amusement of the world. All that concerned her had the trail of Tragedy. It was clear, destiny planned she should drink deep of the bitterness of life.

On the wall a sketch of René hung ; and Leonore, moving about the room, found her eyes constantly drawn to the face of her dead lover. How refined his features, what delicate ideality there ! But weakness also—not strength. She had felt in René the lack of that something which enables men to face the crises of existence. She remembered his hysterical conduct the night of the reception, the parting which

had made her tremble lest in his despair he destroy his life. Her fear had not been groundless then. Yes, she had been right; the rash uselessness of his act proved that she had not misjudged his character.

Why had he not waited longer, that fatal night, at their place of rendezvous? Why had he not given her the opportunity to explain the fortuitous events leading to her being seen in the automobile with George Burton, on the Place de l'Etoile? How easily he had been stricken down by circumstance! What suffering he had inflicted on his parents, on Fidus, on herself by thus embracing the last desperate remedy for human ills!

The details of René's death had come to Leonore through the cruellest sources—the newspapers, which had given the facts with effective garnishment supplied by melodramatic fancy. René was in the act of crossing the Place de l'Etoile when the motor-car containing Burton and herself had been violently stopped by the *chauffeur* to give right-of-way to an electric tram. Leonore knew that the sight had confirmed René in believing her false, and that it had precipitated his suicidal resolves. Fidus—who might have averted the catastrophe—was not at home when the despairing lover sought him, for the recitation at the Trocadéro had detained him until midnight. René had therefore turned away. Thus had the irony of chance played its part in the lamentable drama.

Leonore hardly knew how she reached her apartment from the Morgue, where George Burton abandoned her. There, shut from the curious speculation of the world, she had remained prostrate under the shock of René's suicide. Her lover's death had wiped out all feelings against him that his letter had evoked. For days Leonore continued to shudder over those hours of pleasure enjoyed while René lay dead, a revolver by his side. It all seemed like a terrible nightmare—those hours with Burton. The grisly contrast of that night recalled to her mind the frieze adorning the walls of the Cabaret des Sept Péchés Capitaux, where the bony hand of Death led smiling beauties through the tripping measures of a dance. Looking back upon her mood of that night from the gloom of the awakening, Leonore wondered how she could have sought such a cure for outraged feeling. She told herself that the spirit of some other woman—no, it could not have been herself—had entered into her, and impelled her to conduct herself as she had done.

Yet, after all, had her actions justified the charges brought against her? Had the world the right to call her heartless and possessed of wanton tastes? Hardened and transformed by insult, she had trodden for the moment the path of rash amusement; she had been foolish, forgetful of dignity, but that was the extent of her folly. Some survival of a better self had saved her on the brink of abandonment.

She had not yielded herself to Burton despite the night's temptations. From that humiliation, at least, she had saved herself.

Ah! it was unjust that René's suicide should visit such shame upon her. Public censure had pointed its finger at her as the guilty cause of the tragedy. Fidus had refused to see Louis Damart lest he were come as her ambassador. How this careless remark of Yvonne's had wounded! The gossip of the *soubrette* had brought home to her the more sharply what the world thought of her. Her private life had been sifted, and made the subject of newspaper odium. Paris had pelted her with filth.

Her *bonne* entered the room with a tray of mail. Among her letters Leonore found several from managers of vaudeville theatres wishing to profit by the notoriety which enveloped her: they offered her engagements to recite — “Preferably *The Red Sphinx*.” These insults to the actress and the woman Leonore threw contemptuously aside, to pick up an envelope the handwriting of which seemed familiar.

It was from the Comtesse des Mazures, who, in what seemed to Leonore a vein of patronising piety, seized upon the tragedy to remind her former *pensionnaire* how she had warned her against the pitfalls of the theatrical vocation. The only comfort vouchsafed was the assurance that Leonore might count on the Countess's daily petitions to the Blessed Virgin on her behalf.

Leonore, as she folded up the letter, mused on that strange complacency of the human breast which a confirmation of our righteous forecasts inspires. The Countess had doubtless meant to be kind. But people will only be kind in their own way; and that way is often calculated to tear open the wound rather than salve it.

At the bottom of the pile of mail there lay a note from Paul Mounet. Leonore had written to her Professor to excuse herself from attending the Cours, telling him that after all which had happened she doubted whether she could ever bring herself to return to the Conservatory. She almost feared to read his reply, lest it be as wounding by its pity as the Countess's had been by its moral superiority. His letter proved, however, to be full of kindness. He assured Leonore of his sympathy and his willingness to help her to a theatrical engagement should she adhere to her resolution to leave the Conservatory.

"Often we are forced," he concluded, "to shoulder unmerited responsibilities; and we cannot always answer for the consequence of our actions. Be brave, my little one. In your art you will find the supreme solace."

Tears sprang to Leonore's eyelids.

So there remained at least one friend who did not look upon her as René's murderess!

The countenance that Paul Mounet gave Leonore by his letter gradually wrought a reconstructing

change in her. She brooded less upon the harsh judgments of the world. Tenderer memories of her dead lover drove from her heart its egotistic bitterness. Courage for life returned. Art remained to her—she could find in it the refuge and support that she so sorely needed.

Leonore summed up her powers and resources. Fidus was alienated, his *cabaret* closed; she was without means, beyond what remained to her of her annuity from Mrs Burton, but the small sum would suffice to support her for a while. She could rely on Paul Mounet's help; yet Leonore was aware how difficult it would be, even with so influential an ally, to obtain a good theatrical engagement in competition with Conservatory prize graduates. She had again to face the problems that met her in Paris before Fidus had discovered her and offered her the first stepping-stone to success. Leonore realised as never before how useful the *chansonnier* had been to her, how vitally he had furthered her stage ambitions.

Was Fidus lost to her for ever? Even if it were false that his mind was impaired, would she be able to win back his favour? Leonore asked herself.

Memory brought up to her the stricken face, the mute accusation of the uplifted hand, as Fidus fell on the steps of the Morgue.

Would that man ever forgive?

But Hope, midwifed by self-interest, sprung into being. After all, Leonore reflected, Fidus, even

more than herself, had to contend against desolating void in his life. That very desolation would be an eloquent advocate. She knew that he had possessed no other close friends besides René and herself.

He would need her—and she needed him.

CHAPTER II

IN THE PALAIS-ROYAL GARDENS

WHEN Fidus was able to leave the hospital, he moved into new lodgings. To return to Montmartre would have been to seek haunts of cruellest memory ; and for many years the *chansonnier* had cherished a wish to live in the Palais-Royal.

The Palais-Royal is an oasis of quiet in the midst of turbulent Paris, with its old-fashioned plantains—the trees of Camille Desmoulins and his green *cocarde*—its yellowing time-mossed statues and its formal big-basined fountain. Fidus loved the blackened façades of the quadrangle, their pillared ornamentation and entablatures, where the caprices of History have been written in changing *fleur-de-lys*, Imperial bee, and the Republic's interlacing initials. But neither desertion nor neglect nor gloom of façade have stolen the smile from this charming spot.

In addition to an income, René had left his friend the rarest furnishings of his *hôtel*. So Fidus had been able to satisfy his old desire for the locality he now chose ; and there, in a spacious apartment overlooking the Gardens, house the art treasures from the Place

Pigalle, and what he had reserved of his own belongings when he had sold his *cabaret*.

It was his wont on sunny mornings to find a bench under the old trees of the Palais-Royal, where for hours he would sit thinking. Slow convalescence had followed the illness which confined him for weeks to the Hôtel-Dieu. His mental faculties had at first been mercifully dulled; but memory gradually came back to him, and, as his brain resumed its accustomed currents, Fidus was compelled to face his altered future. Shattered in spirit, he asked himself what life had left to offer him. His art he knew to be dead within him—a shrivelled thing. He had sold his *cabaret*; and never again would he appear before the public as reciter.

In his loneliness Fidus had time to analyse the past, and the woman who was the cause of his changed life.

He had always considered Leonore to be somewhat cold-natured and lacking in attributes of heart, with that egoistic absorption not uncommon to artistic types. But her defects had never lessened his interest in the actress or the woman. One may love without admiring, or even respecting, the object loved; and Fidus was drawn to Leonore by many things—by her talent, her beauty, her proud charm. There was distinction about her personality, and it had affected him from the first. The passion she inspired he had harshly suppressed in his soul; only once had it mastered him—the night he had in his

jealous rage attacked René at his door. This outbreak caused Fidus sorely to regret having offered Leonore the position at the *cabaret*; for his friendship with René had been a sacred thing. Until Leonore entered into their life the intimacy of the two friends had flowed on uninterruptedly, with nothing to mar it; it was Leonore who had bred estrangement, had inspired that moment of bitter hatred against the more fortunate lover, which lay now on Fidus's conscience as a dishonouring blot. It was the shame of this remembrance which increased his grief over the death of René; it seemed to him that his bereavement was punishment for those unworthy feelings. And it increased the loathing he felt for the woman who had driven René to suicide.

That Leonore's hands were stained with René's blood, was what the *chansonnier* said to himself as he lay between life and death on his hospital cot. Among the first broken memories that came back to him was the picture of Leonore's arrival at the Morgue in her flower-betrapped vehicle. It created in him a sense of horror—like the vision of Medea, in her car, come to gloat over the evil her revenge had wrought. Leonore loomed in his imagination as a sanguinary creature of heartless perfidy. No wonder the cruel Red Sphinx of his poem suited so cruel a nature as hers! He cursed in Leonore this Sphinx which had driven its claws into his heart, and thrown red tragedy across his life, as the monster cast its gory shadow on Paris.

But gradually these violent feelings in Fidus passed ; time wove its softening influence. Leonore became an abstraction, an inevitable act of Destiny, while the woman herself faded. The broken-hearted invalid turned to unclouded memories of his dead friend. Knowing himself prematurely aged by suffering, robbed of motive in life, he endeavoured to find in spiritually-peopled solitude the balm of peace.

Not since Louis Damart had visited him at the hospital, and defended Leonore against the charges of the world, had any one spoken the actress's name. In his retirement there were, in truth, few to do so. Finally, one day, his friend, Paul Mounet, alluded to Leonore Redway. It was during a visit the actor was making in the hope of inducing Fidus to attend a performance of the *Antigone* of Sophocles at the Comédie Française. As he left, he said to the *chansonnier* :

"Do you know that Mademoiselle Redway is acting at the Bouffes-du-Nord, and that she is doing well? I wish that you would see her, and work with her as of old."

"Never!" was the reply.

"In time you will, I hope, think better of it. Fidus, is it not wiser, kinder, to forget? Take up your theatre interests. Ah, my friend, when the passion for the stage takes us it never lets us go; do not imagine your love for it is dead. Come to see the *Antigone*; it will do you good."

Paul Mounet's references to Leonore had affected Fidus almost like a shock; and to escape the disturbing emotions aroused in him by the actor's words he went to the theatre, for the first time since Ren 's death, to see the *Antigone*.

It was the morning after the play; and Fidus sat under the bare-branched trees—for it was late September—on his favourite bench in the Palais-Royal. The *Antigone* had profoundly moved him; he had been lifted out of himself into a world of serene and noble beauty, where tragic sorrow was clothed in the simplicity of Greek art. The murmur of the near-by fountain tossing its silver flower in the sun, seemed to take up the grave, beautiful cadences of the play. Antigone, standing, white-mantled, at the threshold of the tomb, haunted his senses with immortal pathos. The solemnity of life as the Greeks conceived it spoke to Fidus's soul. The lofty art of Sophocles had purged his mind of baser passion, meaner mood.

His thoughts led him far from his quiet surroundings. Again there stirred within his breast something of the old passion to create, to express himself in outward form. His blood was touched with that exaltation which comes from contact with the best in art. He abandoned himself to reverie, his dark brow resting on his crossed hands, which clasped an ivory-knobbed stick.

Absorbed, he did not hear the approach of trailing skirts. It was only at the utterance of his name

that he looked up and saw Leonore Redway standing near on the sunlit path.

"Let me speak with you," she implored; "do not bid me go away."

She was dressed in black, and her face wore the air of suffering nobly endured. Her deep, shadow-haunted eyes were fixed on him in eloquent appeal.

"What do you want of me?" the *chansonnier* said, averting his face.

"I want you to forgive me. Ah, Fidus, I am so lonely!"

He neither responded nor looked at her.

"I am so lonely, Fidus!"

Leonore's rich voice, in all its histrionic art, seized his blood like music; he stirred a little.

"What is your loneliness to me?" he answered.

"And have you no pity?"

"Pity?—Yes, for those who deserve pity!"

"'Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?'" she returned sadly, quoting the motto Fidus had put over his *cabaret* stage.

After a moment, Leonore took a seat beside him on the bench.

"Then you will not hear what I have to say?" she asked.

"There is nothing that you can say."

There was a pause, which he broke by brusquely saying:

"Paul Mounet tells me that you are at the Bouffes-du-Nord."

The speech was perfunctory, but Leonore felt its conceding mood.

"Monsieur Mounet has been very kind. The work at the Bouffes is difficult, but I think it good training for me. I suppose that before long——"

"Well?"

"That eventually I shall get an engagement in the provinces. I had hoped that perhaps you——"

"What right have you to hope anything from me?"

"It is not a question of right. After all you have done for me, I thought——" His indignant frown stopped her, and she ended irrelevantly: "If you knew how I have suffered!"

He glanced at her for the first time.

"Yet you are looking well!"

She understood the reproof conveyed, and she said plaintively:

"Is it not my business to conceal my feelings? I have to live. Ah, you are cruel!"

"I cruel? And you?"

"I did not mean to harm you—or any one."

"You may not have meant it, but you succeeded none the less well."

"Why say such things to me, Fidus? We have the same memory, and should we not sorrow together?"

His face hardened at the word "memory."

"Then you refuse me your friendship?" she demanded, her voice trembling.

"I have done with friendship."

Sadly Leonore rose, and with slow, hesitating step moved a few paces from him. Then she looked back to where he still sat with bowed head.

She came and seated herself again by his side.

"Do not repulse me," she pleaded. "You are lonely; it hurts me to see you so desolate. Let me comfort you—it will comfort me." She took his hand in hers. "Forgive me, Fidus!"

He had not withdrawn his hand; and she pressed it to her lips.

CHAPTER III

AN ENGAGEMENT AT THE ODÉON

THE mellow autumn sunshine streamed into Fidus's apartment. It was noon ; and, though a fire crackled in the grate, the windows stood wide, inviting the fragrance of flowers on the balcony. The heavy red curtains were thrust back as far as possible that the occupants of the room might enjoy a sight of the blue October air, and the heavy pink clusters of late-blooming laurels in their big green tubs. Climbing roses had been trained to wreath about the glass door and the windows, so that the broad, terrace-like balcony was embowered in verdure.

Two low-ceiled rooms which gave on the balcony had been adorned by Fidus with his rarest furniture. On the long wall opposite the sitting-room windows were the sculptured wood figures of the Seven Capital Sins, stationed like sentinels. Over the vast divan, brought from the studio, hung a portrait of young Bouchard, curiously empanelled in a Gothic frame of Fidus's designing. This frame, begun before Bouchard's death, had been finished by Fidus during the dreary weeks following his release from the

hospital. On all sides were pictures, busts, hangings, that spoke of René.

Fidus lay stretched on the divan; he still looked weak and sallow-skinned. Leonore, a jade-handled scimitar in her grasp, stood in the centre of the room, a piece of Persian embroidery draped about her as *impromptu* costume. Her pose was erect, and her expression voluptuous, defiant. She had been reciting a passage from François Coppée's *Pour la Couronne*, and was still in spirit the malevolent queen of the play.

"*Très-bien!*" Fidus said. "But stop a while; I am tired."

"Ah no; do not let us stop now," Leonore protested. "I'm in the vein. Come, take your book—I want to go on to the next scene."

"But I'm fagged; I must rest a while."

Leonore pouted like a spoiled child.

"That's always the way with you now! You haven't the old enthusiasm."

"I haven't the old health, Leonore."

"But you give way too much. *Voyons!* A little more energy."

"Perhaps you are right. Give me the book."

And they continued the play until interrupted by a visit from Paul Mounet.

"You are at work, I see. Bravo!" was the actor's greeting on entering the room. "Our *tragédienne* is in fine feather to-day. But you, my poor friend, you do not look well." He took Fidus's hands in

his and eyed him critically. "You have been over-taxing yourself," was his verdict. "Mademoiselle, you mustn't permit his enthusiasm to run away with him!"

"Don't say that!" Leonore cried in consternation. "If you encourage him we shall have a *malade imaginaire* on our hands. It's not work that hurts him."

"I am not of your opinion, mademoiselle," was the rebuking reply. "Our friend must take care of himself. But I am the bearer of good news. I had a talk with Ginisty yesterday, and he promises to give you an *audition* next week. I think that we may count on your *début* this winter in one of the great classic *rôles*." And he told Leonore and Fidus of his interview with the Director of the Odéon.

Paul Mounet had used all his influence to secure his former pupil an engagement. Not having completed her studies and taken a prize at the Conservatory, a *début* in classic repertory at the "Second Théâtre Français" would be an auspicious coming before the public for Leonore as tragic actress. She had won substantial recognition at Fidus's *cabaret*; the scandal of René Bouchard's death had made her the most talked-of actress in Paris; and now was the time to achieve legitimate success in the highest sphere of her art.

The good news that Mounet brought filled Leonore with joy. Her proud dreams appeared

about to be realised. She was to have a *début* at one of the grand State theatres.

Leonore, giving rein to imagination, pictured a triumphant season at the Odéon, followed by a year or two of fresh laurels at the Théâtre Saint-Michel in St Petersburg; and then—perhaps then—that goal of French theatrical ambition, the Comédie Française itself!

She saw herself treading the loftiest heights of fame. There would be sensational lawsuits with the Théâtre Français like those of Bernhardt and Coquelin; she would have a *tournee* in America, with all its gold and newspaper glory; artists would execute her bust, her portrait, for the Luxembourg; she would be courted by the great, importuned by struggling genius; she would know the intoxication of power—live a life of adulation and ease.

Such were the visions that floated before Leonore's eyes.

The *audition* with Ginisty proved to be little more than a formality. On Paul Mounet's advice, Leonore gave the scene from *Pour la Couronne* which she had been studying with Fidus. An engagement was signed for the remainder of the season; and Ginisty promised that she should make her first appearance in Racine's *Phèdre* at one of the classic Mondays in February or March.

Fidus was hardly less pleased than Leonore at his pupil's prospects; and the study of *Phèdre* was taken

up between them with an ardour which threatened to exhaust the *chansonnier's* already depleted powers. But of this Leonore in her youthful ardour never stopped to think. She had always been accustomed to her teacher's invalidism; it was too familiar a fact to impress itself upon a mind altogether preoccupied with personal ambitions.

The two had resumed dramatic work as a natural consequence of their reconciliation. The void left in the *chansonnier's* life by the loss of his friend and the closing of his *cabaret* had somehow to be filled. Leonore was all that remained out of the wreck of his former life. He welcomed her back into old-time intimacy, hoping that through her he might forget. But face to face with the woman René had loved, in his rooms at the Palais-Royal, eloquent with the artist's belongings, with his portrait looking down upon them, Fidus found that Leonore, far from being the opiate he had expected, was salt in the wound of his bereavement.

On that first visit to Fidus, after their meeting in the Palais Gardens, Leonore experienced real emotion. With the sincerity of the moment, common to temperamental natures such as Leonore's, she managed to put herself perfectly in accord with Fidus's grief. René's name was not spoken between them; but the *chansonnier* felt that they both suffered, and were bound together as only a common sorrow can bind.

Leonore gave up her engagement at the Bouffes-

du-Nord shortly after her reconciliation with Fidus, in order that she might devote all her time to fitting herself for the Odéon engagement Paul Mounet had finally procured for her. Every day she went to the *chansonnier's* apartment for work; and sometimes she and her teacher would go to the neighbouring Théâtre Français, or, oftener, spend the evening reading. Usually it was Leonore who read to Fidus, since now he was easily fatigued.

As the weeks passed, Fidus sometimes wondered how deep were Leonore's regrets for her dead lover. On the few occasions that René was referred to, he took her embarrassment for the same reserve he himself felt on a subject so sacred. That René's memory was cherished seemed proved by the fact that she still wore mourning—black was becoming to Leonore—and that she sought no pleasures or outside companionship, but lived for art alone.

CHAPTER IV

THÉSÉE OR HIPPOLYTE ?

LEONORE had reason to congratulate herself on the *rôle* in which she was to make what was her real theatrical *début*.

In France every tragic actress looks upon Racine's Phèdre as the touchstone of her art. From the time of Champmeslé, coached by the author himself in the character, down to Sarah Bernhardt of our day, all *tragédiennes* have played the part, and many have achieved in it their highest success. It may, perhaps, be called the greatest female *rôle* of dramatic literature.

Racine's Phèdre is not the Phædra of the Greeks, though preserving the semblances of its prototype. The classic story, assimilated by the refined mentality of the French author, is re-born, stripped of its ruggedness, endowed instead with all the chaste elegance of seventeenth-century art, while the character of Phèdre is made a fruitful lesson. The Greek mantle of the sinful queen veils a tormented

breast, that in sensibility and conscience is more Christian than pagan.

According as Racine tells the legend, Phèdre, consort of Thésée, conceives during the long absence of the hero, an unlawful passion for her stepson, Hippolyte. Weighed down by misery and shame, she resolves to die, and is only dissuaded by the prayers of her faithful nurse, C  none, to whom she unburdens her soul. News arrives that Thés  e is no more, and the people agitate the appointment of Hippolyte as his successor to the throne. Ph  dre, zealous for the rights of her own infant son, seeks Hippolyte, and during the interview is moved to avow her incestuous love, and is repulsed with horror by Hippolyte. Next it is learned that the rumour of Th  s  e's death is false—that he has already returned. Ph  dre despairs for her guilty secret; and C  none, to save her mistress, accuses Hippolyte of the crime of which Ph  dre is the author. Th  s  e in his wrath exiles his son, calling upon Neptune to avenge his wrongs. Ph  dre laments her silence, and the exile of Hippolyte, until she learns that Hippolyte loves Aricie, the Athenian princess, when jealous fury triumphs over all other emotions. Th  s  e obtains proof of his son's innocence, but too late; for Neptune, in answer to his prayer, has sent a monster from the deep who causes Hippolyte's death. Whereon Ph  dre, after cursing C  none for her false counsels, takes poison, and, confessing her guilt to Th  s  e, expires at his feet.

"Yours is a great opportunity," Fidus told Leonore, "but also a dangerous one. I wish sometimes that you were to make your *début* in some less well-known part. On the other hand, to succeed in *Phèdre* is triumph indeed — and triumph it must be!"

Into drilling Leonore in her new *rôle* Fidus poured a passion of enthusiasm, for which he paid frequently by nights of ravaging insomnia. But his heart was set on Leonore's success, which he felt would, in a certain sense, be the crowning glory of his own life.

His method of teaching was a severe one, under which his pupil often chafed. But he always inspired her; and she found that his insistence on the exact value of line and intonation gave her admirable mastery of her part. When a scene did not satisfy him, after repeated effort on Leonore's part, he would bid her pass on and take up the unsatisfactory passage with him later.

"Never worry," he would say, "over an ineffective scene. Wait until you are in the humour for it, then work with all your soul. In that way you avoid being mechanical. Where you can do nothing else, study your text. Try to acquire the worth of every word; perfect your phrasing, your inflections. That is the A B C of the actor's art, and all the talent in the world is nothing without it."

Over the entrance of *Phèdre* in the first act—where she confides to the sympathising *Œnone* her guilty

love for Hippolyte—Leonore experienced the most difficulty.

"Leave that for the present," Fidus bade. "Wait until you have the *rôle* in your blood. The scene is the crux of the play. A peculiarity of *Phèdre* is that it begins at the highest tragic pitch."

One morning Leonore entered Fidus's apartment, her cheeks scarlet from the crisp winter air, her eyes full of life. Her whole bearing showed that she laboured under intense excitement.

"I am ready for that scene to-day," she cried. "I have it 'in the blood,' as you say—I *am* *Phèdre*. Come, let us begin at the beginning!"

In a moment Leonore had transformed herself into the conscience-stricken *Phèdre*, the wasted queen of the first act of the play.

With tottering steps she advanced, dragging her limbs painfully along, as though she were weighted down by burden unbearable. Falteringly, in whispered accents, she began the lament to *C  none* how that she "can no more," "her forces abandon her, her eyes the light of day dazzles, her trembling knees give under her." Then, with an "Alas!" that seemed her expiring sigh, the wretched spouse of *Th  s  e* sinks into a chair.

With consummate art Leonore went through the gesture of discharging the royal jewels and veils, while, in the fretful tone of a tired child, she breathes the words:

"These vain ornaments, these veils, how they bear me down!"

CEnone makes reply, but her mistress appears not to heed until she catches the words, "the light of day." Then a look of exaltation passes over her face, she rises from her chair, and in a voice no longer pathetically faint, but rounded now to tragic sonority, Phèdre delivers her superb farewell to life:

"Sun, I look upon thee for the last time!"

After which she falls back into a seat as if her spirit had indeed winged its flight towards the Sun-God in those final words.

"Well, why don't you go on? It's your turn!"

At Leonore's laugh Fidus started. For a moment he stared at her bewildered — the illusion had been perfect.

"That is real art!" he exclaimed. "Continue. Quick! the whole play while you have the fire!"

But Leonore protested that she no longer felt in the humour.

"So," she said, giving her teacher one of her challenging smiles, "you thought that I could never do that scene? But you did not know me! Are you satisfied *now* that I can be Phèdre?"

She could not be persuaded to recite another line.

"No," she cried gaily; "the weather is too fine to stay indoors. We must enjoy the sunshine. Come, my friend, you should break your habit of never leaving the Palais-Royal. Let us go somewhere and have *déjeuner* and amuse ourselves."

There was no resisting her outburst of spirits.

"And where, pray, are you taking me?" Fidus demanded, when they had descended to the Gardens.

"To the Louvre," was the reply.

"The Louvre!" he said, in surprise.

"Yes; we're going to visit the antiques and study poses and drapery."

They entered through the Pavillon de l'Horloge, and paced the ground-floor of the Museum crowded with Greek and Roman marbles. Fidus was struck with the knowledge that Leonore had of the collection.

"During my first year in Paris," she explained, "I took the greatest delight trying to find pictures and statues of the characters in plays that I was studying. I was quite puzzled to discover that Nero in his busts was always old, and never wore a beard—it wasn't the hero of Racine at all. And Augustus and Cinna and Agrippina—I soon knew them all. Fancy! I even grew enthusiastic over David's *Three Horaces*! Ah, you can't understand what it means to come from a land where there is no art to a city which is art itself—where one has the treasures of centuries!"

"Yes, but I do understand," he answered. "That is how I felt myself, when, a peasant boy from Alsace, I came to Paris. I had seen no art. All I knew of sculpture was what I learned from the spire of Strassburg's cathedral."

"So you are not Parisian?"

"No; I am not even pure French. My mother was German, and it was from her, I think, that I

drew my love of wood-carving, the art that first attracted me and brought me to Paris. I had learned the elements of a wood-carver's trade in my grandfather's workshop at Strassburg, where I was considered unusually clever in my work. It was that which fired my ambitions to be not an artisan but an artist."

"And Paris—was it kind to you?" Leonore asked. She had never heard him refer to his past life, and these mentions, trivial as they were, surprised and pleased her. It seemed to her real proof of Fidus's deepening friendship. She was full of curiosity to know more.

"Was Paris kind? Yes, kinder than I anticipated. I had brought sufficient money with me—the little capital left me by my mother—to keep me for a year or so. But it was hardly needed; I soon found enough work to give me a comfortable living, while enabling me to further my art dreams. No, I had no reason to complain of Paris. The fault lay not in Paris, but in myself."

"With yourself?" she echoed in a voice calculated to inspire his confidences. She wondered if he were about to furnish a clue to that mystery of his past on which she had so often speculated. Memory of her earlier suspicions came back to her. How unkind those suspicions were! She had long ago dismissed them as groundless.

"Yes," he replied; "it was not Paris that made my early days difficult. My health began to fail. I

had always been subject to nerve attacks; and these became so frequent and serious I had at last to go to the hospital. But hospitals have never done me much good. My nerve trouble is incurable; it has been my handicap in life, for it has forbade sustained effort, and made me what I am—a dabbler in the arts.”

He said no more, though Leonore tactfully waited. She glanced at last at his musing face, seeing stamped there the confirmation of his words. It was those deep-cut lines of suffering—the suffering of a lifetime—that gave Fidus his striking look. If a torturing malady had been an obstacle to the *chansonnier's* arrival in life, it had at least refined his features, given *cachet* to his whole appearance. Yes, Fidus breathed all the potentiality of genius, Leonore thought to herself; and his cross had been the ills of the body. How little she had considered Fidus's health, how seldom sympathised with him on that account! But what did Leonore know about physical suffering? Nature had endowed her with a perfect constitution; she had never experienced ache or pain. The pulse of her splendid vitality robbed her of a certain tenderness, caused her often to seem cold, egoistic, unresponsive.

They turned down the Corridor de Pan.

“Ah, here it is!” she cried. “Come, Fidus; here is Thésée!” And she drew him to where stood a full-length statue of the Greek demi-god. “What a magnificent figure of a man! A hero, indeed! How *could* Phèdre have preferred a Hippolyte to a

Thésée?" she asked disdainfully. She stood surveying the statue enthusiastically.

"But Hippolyte was young and handsome—Thésée growing old."

"What if Thésée was? He wasn't too old to love or be loved," she retorted. "The play tells you that. No, I don't understand Racine there. I suppose it was in the Greek story; still, I don't believe a woman like Phèdre ever *could* have cared for any one but Thésée—I know I couldn't have! Racine ought to have made the spouse of the mild Hippolyte in love with his heroic sire. Why doesn't some one write a new *Phèdre*," she went on whimsically—"a play where the wife of a young man loves her husband's father?"

"What a monster such a woman would be!"

"Yes, but love can make us monsters!"

Leonore's sparkling glance encountered the other's grave look. Each experienced a sudden unaccountable thrill, vague, premonitory. It was as if some instinct in them foresaw an issue of their own souls that gave significance to their words.

"You have Phèdre, indeed, in your blood to-day," was Fidus's comment.

"Does that surprise you?" she replied. "To act a character I have always to fancy myself that character in real life. It's like Faust bartering his soul for youth. I sell myself to the *rôles* I'm studying. Oh, you wouldn't guess what strange transformations take place inside of me! Paul Mounet used to say that I lacked initiative in acting; and it's true. I

can't sit down and mentally construct a part. I don't master a *rôle*, it masters me—possesses me so utterly that even off the stage I'm more the character than myself. It's odd, isn't it?"

"It's dangerous—if all you say is true."

"Ah! that is what an old priest said when I first arrived at Paris. I remember I had gone up to Montmartre to see the city. It happened that the talk we had turned on *Phèdre*, and the priest spoke of the spirit in which it ought to be acted. He warned me against what he called 'losing oneself in one's part' on the stage. I used to recall his words, and try not to abandon myself in this personal way in parts that weren't 'good and noble.' But that was only where characters didn't interest me much; where they did, I *had* to let them work their will with me—possess me—*obsess* me, if you choose, body and soul. Yes," she ended, with a shrug, "I used to think about such things—the effect of acting on life and character, I mean."

"And why don't you think about them now?"

"Why not?" she returned, with feeling. "Because, Fidus, I have reached the stage of development when one dares to be sincere with oneself. I know my nature better now; I know that nothing really matters to me except my art. For success in art I would barter my very soul. To be, for instance, the greatest *Phèdre* the stage has ever known—what price would I not willingly pay! You tell me I have *Phèdre* in my blood to-day. I'm glad I have. I

want to think and feel nothing but Phèdre—if that will mean triumph in the *rôle*!”

“You are more artist than woman, Leonore!”

“And am I peculiar in that respect? Isn’t art a kind of madness that seizes upon one to the exclusion of other things—an *idée fixe* of one’s soul? That’s the reason artists are either too human or not human enough, and oughtn’t to be judged by the common standards. There’s always lacking the ordinary moral and mental balance. But we’ve come out to enjoy ourselves—not to philosophise!”

They left the Louvre, and Leonore declared that she wished to cross the river for lunch.

“Somewhere near the Odéon,” she suggested. “Phèdre wants to behold the field of her future glory!”

Fidus took her to the Café Voltaire, an old-fashioned restaurant with traditional sanded floor, white-and-gold woodwork, big mirrors, lace curtains—a type fast disappearing now in Paris, crowded with gaudy *brasseries*, frescoed and tapestried in incongruous German fashion. The Café Voltaire faces the Place de l’Odéon—that bit of *province* transferred to the Capital—to which the Odéon Theatre gives picturesque dignity.

They took a table at a window where they could look across the Square and see the colonaded façade of the old play-house.

“It was in the Odéon,” Fidus said, “that Beaumarchais’s *Figaro* was originally given. There the

immortal barber first thundered his imprecations against State and Society ; there Cherubin sang his sentimental romance to the tune of '*Marlbrotk-s'en-va-t-en-guerre*,' and sighed for the beautiful Countess. Ah, for a young lady from Chicago, you make your *début* on famous old boards!" And Fidus told anecdotes from the theatrical history of Paris that he knew so well: stories about the famous actors and actresses of former times: Talma, who taught Napoleon to be kingly; Rachel, the greatest of Phèdres; Frederick Lemaître, Lafontaine, Melingue, last of a lofty line. Leonore had not seen him in such a mood since René's death.

"Whose statue is that?" she asked, indicating a graceful monument on the Square.

"It is a statue of Emile Augier," the answer was; "the author of *Les Effrontés* and *Le Fils de Giboyer*, and, with Sandeau, of the admirable *Gendre de M. Poirier*. I was present at the unveiling; and I shall never forget that day. It was the first time that I ever saw a great man. I remember I was standing not far from this *café*. Among those officially present at the unveiling was a tall, fine-statured man with silver hair; the face, for all its worldly wisdom, one of the kindest. I was told it was Alexandre Dumas *fils*. You may believe how my heart beat as I gazed at him!"

"He is one of your idols?"

"Yes; I hold him to be as great a moralist as he was playwright. And how great a heart he had!

I doubt, however, if many of his plays will live as long as his prefaces."

"You except, of course, *La Dame aux Camélias*?"

"Yes, always excepting *La Dame aux Camélias* and *Denise*: the secret of whose success is that in them Dumas has drawn women larger than their faults."

At mention of *Denise* there came to Leonore's mind a vision of the day at the Conservatory when, under influence of that play, she had sobbed her confession to René with streaming tears and a heart torn with anguish. Had she been sincere? she asked herself wonderingly, recalling the misery of that avowal. Was it her own or Denise's despair that had bowed her head there in the presence of her lover? Ah, the instinct to live drama, to be the parts she acted, how always this had dominated the mere woman in her! She thought with admiration what a scene it had been. Fidus was right in calling her more actress than woman. Personality she had none: she was only—*stage rôles*!

Gratitude towards Fidus came to Leonore as they sat there. Almost for the first time she expressed in heartfelt words her appreciation of all he had done for her.

"If I turn out to be a Rachel," she said, "it will be owing to you. You have indeed been my Samson. You will continue, will you not, to work with me and inspire me? After Phèdre, I want to act *Athalie*, and the *Rodogune* of Corneille, and

Medea — *there's* a part! Oh, Fidus, I must be great!"

She leaned her elbows on the table that separated them. Fidus sat musingly scrutinising the intense face opposite that glowed with its dreams and ambitions. And he who thought and felt so deeply, but whom nature had cruelly handicapped, congratulated himself that he had indeed found the perfect instrument whereof he had long dreamed.

He lifted his glass of Chambertin, and as he looked into her deep eyes, he said :

"To Phèdre—to my Rachel!"

It had been a memorable day for both—a day in which their natures had touched as never before; the shadow on their lives of René's death had retreated under its spell. Fidus, forgetting his habitual reserve, had shown himself a man different from the one Leonore knew; his bitterness of soul seemed to have departed, together with the sadness and sense of age which had long burdened him.

CHAPTER V

THE VILE CONTAGION OF THE NIGHT

FIDUS and Leonore were driving back to the Palais-Royal.

There was no denying that the dress rehearsal of *Phèdre* had been a failure.

Leonore had not been master of her powers. She had been oppressed by the strangeness of the vast Odéon stage; for there had been few rehearsals. The *Phèdre* and the *Aricie* were the only *débutantes*; all the other parts had been played again and again by the Odéon company. Leonore had felt confused, too, by the glimpse that she had had of her fellow-artists down in the half-dark of the auditorium, where the immense grey cloth covering the pit was turned back so as to leave two or three rows of seats with which to accommodate the score of people admitted to this last rehearsal.

An atmosphere of half-concealed hostility had surrounded Leonore. The want of friendliness towards her at the Odéon was easily explained. Her associates resented the fact that she was a

foreigner, and, worse, had not even finished her course at the Conservatory; and they therefore had surrounded the Aricie, a Conservatory *Premier Prix*, and showed her exaggerated welcome in contrast with their treatment of "*l'Américaine*." Ginisty, the Director of the Odéon, had made it plain to Leonore that he was in an ill-humour; and she left the theatre thoroughly chagrined.

In the cab Leonore said to Fidus:

"You are very disappointed, aren't you?"

"Don't distress yourself about to-day," was his consoling answer. "It proves nothing. Remember the saying, 'A poor dress rehearsal, a good first night.'"

"Then you haven't lost faith in me?"

"Can you ask, Leonore?" His voice was feeble, and he leaned back on the cushions.

"You are tired, my poor friend," Leonore said. "This work with me has overtaxed you, I fear. You oughtn't to have come to the rehearsal to-day." Disappointment had made her more considerate.

"It is nothing," he responded; and in silence they finished the short course across the river. Fidus sat with his eyes closed, looking pale and ill; Leonore frowned moodily through the cab window, living over her afternoon's failure. A dull February twilight was falling. A streak of sunset red lay low on the cloudy west. The world was as grey and colourless as her spirits.

"Would you like me to come in a while?" she asked, when they reached the Palais-Royal.

"No; I think I shall rest," he replied. "Good courage! You'll be down in the morning?"

"Yes, I'll come for lunch."

He held her hands lingeringly. Then, abruptly releasing them, he turned away and mounted to his rooms.

There he threw himself, with a sigh, on the divan. Supine, without motion, he lay in the deepening dusk until his man-servant came to bar the shutters.

"You need not light the lamp," Fidus told him.

The servant added coals to the fire in the grate.

"Does Monsieur wish nothing else?"

"No; you may go for the night."

Fidus continued to lie motionless where he had thrown himself in weariness of soul. All day he had fought the knowledge that crushed him now like a dead weight. He could no longer deceive himself into believing that his feelings for Leonore Redway were merely those of a teacher for a brilliant *protégée*; he loved her with more than a renewal of past passion, that passion which he believed dead and had only been slumbering; he loved her with twofold intensity sprung from loneliness, the void in his life and that daily intimacy with Leonore fostered. Realisation of his feelings came as shock to the *chansonnier*, causing him acute mental suffering. The thought of loving Leonore was abhorrent; he did not wish to love her; it

dishonoured him and her ; it was a sacrilege that he should crave the woman who had robbed him of his friend ; it trampled his cherished memories of René—René, who had aided him in direst need, who had been generous, devoted, to whom he owed a lasting debt—that he should even wish to profit by the tragedy of his death.

Why, he demanded of himself, had he ever allowed Leonore to re-enter his life, to establish herself on the old footing? That in itself had been profanation. René had died, cursing her for her unworthiness ; yet he, Fidus, his closest friend, had welcomed her into his solitude, made her interests his own, treated her as an esteemed intimate. It had been weakness to yield to her appeals for reconciliation on that first meeting in the Palais-Royal Gardens ; he had suffered himself to be won over to sympathy and pity for her, to the belief that she had been traduced—a victim of circumstance, in the face of what he himself felt and knew. Ah ! too quickly time had effaced that picture of her arriving like a carnival queen at the Morgue where René lay dead, a hole through his temples, blood-stained, ghastly, surrounded by a gaping crowd. How could he forget—turn from such remembrances—with passion in his soul for the author of the tragedy?

Fidus, his nerves already tortured by work, felt himself failing under the oppression of his thoughts. The symptoms of his ever-dogging malady were creeping upon him ; the recklessness of months,

his unheeding sacrifices to Leonore, had told at last: he was about to be ill again.

Now that the shutters were closed, and fresh coals masked the blaze, the room was a blank.

In the racked brain of Fidus swirled confusedly all the episodes of his life. Further back than his dead friend his thoughts travelled. Among all insistent pictures, recollections, images, there was always one haunting face, vague at first, then more distinct, at last unescapable—Margot's face, the face of the "Wood-carver's Vision." Plaintive, appealing, childishly winsome, it hovered in his soul. With the fleeting years Margot had become a faint, forgiving shadow of the past, a tender memory stealing on his sense like the breath of a spring flower. Now again her image was accusation as she came to him, with the wondering terror in her eyes, and on her soft little throat the blue finger-marks——

Was he never to forget?

Fidus was again a Paris student, a victim of an incurable malady, lying ill in his mean lodging in the populous poor district of Menilmontant. His health had deserted him in the midst of his ambitious work, and, a prisoner to his couch, forgot by all the world, he groaned aloud in his suffering.

But one morning came a tap at his door, a gentle, timid tap, and his neighbour, Margot, the little work-girl, entered. She had heard his feverish moans in

passing. Seeing his condition, Margot cared for him. She found his purse and counted the contents.

"It is enough to manage on for weeks," she cried joyously. "I can stay and nurse you till you're well."

She tended him through his illness. Convalescence was slow ; but he could do some wood-carving. The work paid well—for Fidus's most genial ideas came when he was in pain—and he was able, as the spring advanced, to leave for the country. They stayed all summer near Ville d'Avray. Gratitude to Margot became love—the love of Fidus's life. The sweet country air, the sunshine of Margot's presence, seemed to restore him to health.

Autumn drew on, and Fidus and Margot returned to Paris. Fidus began to be known as an artist-carver, and his wood sculptures were sought for by connoisseurs. But, alas! a new affliction awaited him. Margot, with whom he had been inexpressibly happy at Ville d'Avray, became hateful to him—though at times he loved her as much as ever. Indeed, between intervals of hate his tenderness was even greater. But often, how often! she suffered from his cruelty; yet the poor child only loved him the more.

One day as he was at work an extraordinary sensation seized him. Dropping his tools, he returned home, staggering on the way like a drunkard. His head seemed full of blood, and his eyes throbbed almost to bursting. On entering the house he found Margot lying asleep on her couch.

At the sight of her Fidus uttered a choking cry. The sound aroused her, and as she started up Fidus sprang upon her, his fingers closing about her throat. After a while Margot ceased to struggle; the soft arms with which she strove to push him away dropped powerless. Then, beholding what he had done, Fidus fell senseless.

For hours he lay insensible. When he recovered his consciousness Margot was gone. She had left a letter for him.

"I suffer so," she wrote, "and I am frightened. You know, I am willing to die for you, but why did you hurt me? I shall come to you if you want me. Do not fear that any one will ever know what has happened. The marks on my throat do not show with my collar on. If you are ill, please let me come! I shall not be afraid to-morrow. Good-bye until you send for me. Excuse this bad writing. My eyes hurt, and I am all trembling.—*Je t'aime toujours!*"

But Fidus feared to see Margot again. Next day he left his lodgings. He sent all the money he had in a letter that told Margot he intended entering an asylum, and that she must not try to find him. He changed his name, beginning his life anew as Fidus—"Fidus the artist."

Fidus stirred on the divan, where he lay living over the past. He groaned in spirit. Why should this memory of Margot afflict him now?

"Love can make monsters of us all."

Leonore's words, uttered the day they had visited the Louvre together, came back to him.

Ah, he had been a monster to Margot! And now he would let love make him monstrous again: he would commit the crime of coveting his friend's betrothed. Leonore belonged to René. Death only made her more sacredly his. To rob the dead arms that still held her were sacrilege. Truly, love can transform men out of all likeness to their best selves.

Slowly the flames crept up in conquest of the ebon coals; their tiny tongues wavered and grew larger, brighter; now some redder finger of flame darted, probing here and there the darkness.

Above the prone form of the *chansonniere* two carven images, hideous, grinning, peered out as the crimson flare caught them, then were enveloped in the gloom. The tortured man, his eyes closed to all but inner visions, did not see how two Deadly Sins, lean Murder and soft-smiling Lust, exchanged private glances, knowing nods. Nor did he see how the antic light groped, resting lovingly on precious vase and ornament of bronze, gifts of a dead hand, until at last, in the frame so curiously wrought with a care now mockery, it found what it sought — the portrait of René. And then the flames leapt high. Their glow flooded the room. And in red hideousness all Seven Deadly Sins smirked and mouthed.

Fidus started to his feet, passing a hand across his eyes as if to wipe away the plaguing hallucinations of

the dark. He lighted the lamp. A clock struck eight. He counted the strokes wonderingly as they repeated themselves from a distant belfry. He thought he had lain there in his room for hours. He tried to read. As he feverishly turned the pages, reading on at random, the book slipped from Fidus's nervous hold. As he picked it up again, it opened at the title-page, on which was written: "*Ton ami, René.*" He put the volume from him.

"I cannot help it, René," he muttered aloud; "I love her." And he got up and looked long in the fire, as if asking of it comfort and companionship. Then he shivered. "I cannot stay here," he thought.

He took up cloak and hat and descended to the street. He walked along the Rue de Rivoli, mixing with its noisy life, until he reached the Place between the Louvre and Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. There, fleeing the crowded thoroughfares, he turned towards the river and followed along the quays, the palace on one hand, and on the other the river.

When he reached the window at the end of the Gallerie d'Apollon he stopped to admire this beautiful specimen of Renaissance art. The street lamp, throwing its glow on the balconied recess, caught the pallor of a statue inside the Louvre.

Fidus started.

It seemed to him that the statue was Leonore, in the white mantle of incestuous Phèdre.

What was she doing there — seeking her lover, Hippolyte? No, she had preferred the older man,

Thésée, not Hippolyte. Not the young and handsome Hippolyte?—not René? Then—himself?

Drawing nearer, he peered into the window.

“Leonore!” he called.

But as the figure seemed, in answer to his call, to stretch out its arms to him, he was struck with terror, and fled.

Along the immense length of the palace Fidus ran; and at every one of the stately row of windows he beheld the fleeting figure.

On he fled, too fascinated not to look, yet dreading what he saw.

At length he stopped, panting with exhaustion, chill sweat pouring down his cheeks. He looked about him: he had reached the end of the great sombre building. Before him stretched the gardens of the Tuileries, and, to his left, across the Seine, the charred, tree-grown ruins of the Cour des Comptes loomed against the sky. The spot was deserted save for a cab, rumbling over the Pont-Royal. The presto tune of the horses’ hoofs seemed to waken him as out of dream-troubled sleep. Jolly with drink, the cabman hummed to himself as he cracked his whip. He drew up in front of Fidus.

“*Voilà, monsieur!*” he cried.

Fidus entered the cab, saying:

“To Place Vintimille!”

Mechanically he had got into the vehicle, mechanically given Leonore’s address.

The cabman started off, taking up again his

Provençal ditty. Fidus sat motionless in his seat, strange fancies teasing his brain. He began muttering one of his *cabaret* songs to the man's tune. The red-faced Jehu, hearing, turned his head.

"Monsieur is Provençal?" he asked.

Fidus stared at him in surprise.

It was a chilly night, with multitudes of stars in the moonless heavens. Lengthy black shadows lay on the barren Tuileries Gardens. For all its twinkling golden lights, Paris was swathed in a wistful gloom. The Column on the Place Vendome lifted a sombre finger as the cab rattled on in the direction of Montmartre. They came to the Place de l'Opera.

Here Fidus suddenly sprang up in the cab with a cry of "Leonore!"

The cabman pulled up; and the *chansonnier*, hastily thrusting money in his hand, jumped out in pursuit of a figure seen in the passing throng.

But it was only another illusion of his senses.

Fidus was trembling now. Feeling the need of a stimulant, he took a seat at a *café* terrace and called for cognac. Then, engaging another cab, he was driven to the Place Vintimille.

The hour was late, but telling the *concierge* that he must see Mademoiselle Redway, Fidus mounted the steep apartment house stairs to the floor on which Leonore lodged. There, before her door, he hesitated, his hand on the bell-rope.

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Leonore, in her nightdress, opened the door in answer to his summons.

"Fidus!" she exclaimed in surprise.

As she stood there on the threshold in her disarray, her blond hair loosened about her, her dark eyes dim with sleep, she seemed to the *chansonnier* more beautiful than he had ever dreamed.

He caught her to his breast; the warmth of her body searched his blood, mounting to his brain like fire.

"Thésée!" she whispered, as their lips met.

At the kiss he woke. He was still standing there, before the door of Leonore's apartment.

His coming to Montmartre had been the blind following of an instinct. Despair had driven him from his room. But on the quay, when his diseased senses evoked Leonore's ghostly self at the Louvre window, despair had turned to passion; and he was like a storm-swept vessel drawn helplessly on the reefs.

Fidus had lived in imagination, as he paused there at Leonore's threshold, what he felt might have been had he rung the bell.

Now the thoroughly awakened condition of his mind acted as check to passion's impulse.

Fidus saw himself standing on the brink of a precipice, into which he had plunged in imagination. He would not fall in fact, he told himself.

Turning away, he groped a passage down the dark stairs and reached the cool night air.

Only then did he know himself saved.

Without clear conscious intent, Fidus, on leaving the Place Vintimille, roamed along the Outer Boulevards, on through the pleasure-seeking throngs, across the brightly-lighted Place Blanche, where in a kind of daze he stared at the slowly circling arms of the Moulin Rouge—the mill that crushes between its grindstones the souls of men. On he went, bearing with him the shadow of his obsessions. And instinctively the crowd made way for the stoop-shouldered, misshapen figure—stood aside at sight of his face, witness of the man's descent into the limbo of fleshly torments. So the Florentines had pointed finger at their poet "who had seen hell."

Past the *cafés* and glaring façades of places of amusement he roamed on, past his own *cabaret*—which Fidus did not even notice—until he came to the Place Pigalle.

There, across the fountain-adorned Square, eloquent of so many daily happenings, rose conspicuously the high white-fronted *hôtel* that had been the home of René Bouchard.

The shutters were barred, and across the whole length of the *atelier* stretched a great strip of canvas, on which in huge black letters was the eye-arresting announcement :

"TO LET!! TO LET!! TO LET!!"

The little grass plot behind the iron gate was

littered with paper, sticks, broken bottles ; the once neatly-kept shrubs were brown and dead.

Fidus stood there, one hand resting on the padlocked gate.

Before this harsh reminder of his bereavement the wound in his heart bled afresh. Yet, despite sorrowing, calmness, born of self-conquest, descended on his spirit. He felt something in him was knit together by his resistance to temptation. He breathed a rarer air of life.

Fidus, for one moment, tasted what life might have been had not madness and disease robbed his cup, giving him as his portion bitter lees.

Was it prayer for the future or tears for the past that bowed his head as he lingered before René's deserted doorstep?

CHAPTER VI

DAUGHTER OF PASIPHÆ

FIDUS was waiting for Leonore at his apartment. She had told him on their parting after the Odéon rehearsal, that she would come that morning to lunch, and it was now long after his usual hour for *déjeuner*. He began to feel uneasy at her tardiness, lest it mean that she had met with some mischance on this all-important day.

Of Leonore's *début* that evening as Phèdre, Fidus was now able to think to the exclusion of all else. He had, as he believed, trampled his passion for the woman underfoot in the night of madness and moral struggle just passed; and in the calm of a reconstructed self he found his vital interest in the actress strengthened and refreshed. Although languid from loss of sleep and acutely nervous still, Fidus felt better that morning; the shadow of coming illness seemed to have retreated.

At last the door-bell sounded; and he heard Leonore's voice in the hall, bidding Joseph arrange a bunch of tulips. It seemed to Fidus's present

over-sensitive ear that the voice was unusually gay—jarringly gay.

Leonore threw open the sitting-room door in her most melodramatic manner.

“Well, *cher maître!*” she cried. “How is CEnone, Hippolyte, Thésée? *Phèdre se porte à merveille*, and has no desire to see the sun for the last time to-day. And *what* a sun! It is positively like summer. I took a long walk out in the Bois—it was beautiful! I’ve brought you some flowers—Joseph is putting them in water. How are you, my friend? In good humour, I hope—and confident about to-night?”

She continued her extravagant chatter, not noticing Fidus’s wasted looks. The previous day she had been discouraged, depressed by the failure of the rehearsal, and the rare mood had made her sympathetic and observant; to-day she was herself again, sanguine, high-keyed, full of animal spirits that blinded her to the ills of others.

“So you slept well?” Fidus said.

“I should think so. I slept ‘on both ears’ from nine last night to nine this morning. And you had a good rest?”

“No, I had—dreams.”

“And I, also.” Leonore’s laugh was almost child-like in its buoyant egotism. She came and sat down beside him. “Listen to my dream! I thought that I was in the Louvre—there in that room where, you remember, we discussed Thésée and Hippolyte. I wandered about among the statuary——”

"The Louvre? You dreamt that you were in the Louvre, last night?"

"Yes, wasn't it odd? Ah, here comes Joseph to announce lunch. Bravo! I have an appetite! I could eat—the Seven Capital Sins!"

Fidus followed her brilliant glance that rested on the mouthing figures on the wall.

"Phèdre is truly in good spirits to-day."

They passed into the adjoining room, where on the lunch table stood the flowers Leonore had brought with her—a great bunch of yellow tulips.

During luncheon Fidus sat silent and eating little.

"How apathetic you are!" she said at last.

"Am I? I suppose it's because I had a bad night."

Leonore looked at him curiously, noting the difference in his manner towards her to-day. It was not merely that he was fatigued—she saw now how worn and nerve-ridden he looked—that caused the change in him; it arose from something more significant than that. Often she had noticed, during the first few months following René's death, how fits of gloomy reserve would seize him, and she knew that he was thinking of the part she had played in that unforgettable tragedy. Then it would be that she laboured most to charm him—to win him from his dark and bitter remembrances. But of late, ever since their outing, when they had lunched together at the Café Voltaire and Fidus had entertained her with theatrical reminiscences, his spirits had been brighter and more equal, his treatment of her full

of unvarying warmth. She would not have been woman had she not suspected the cause of this transformation. It was plain to her that Fidus loved her, or rather had, perhaps unconsciously, returned to earlier feelings—the attitude of a lover who had resigned his hopes of love because of another's prior claim. Leonore had come to understand, what she had always half-suspected, that Fidus had sacrificed his passion for her out of fidelity to René. This explanation made much clear which had perplexed her during the brief weeks of her betrothal to his artist friend. It was the explanation, too, of his surprising outbreak in the *atelier* when he had thrown down the volume of *The Tempest* and left René and herself with an ironic farewell to "Ferdinand and Miranda"—left them like an embittered Caliban, too old and misshapen to bear the sight of their youth and happiness in each other. At first she had interpreted the action as jealous irritation towards one who had usurped an intimate and only friend. But she saw this incident, and many others that had occurred afterwards, in a new light: it could only spring from one great cause.

Whatever doubt of Fidus's love she still entertained had been dissipated during the last few weeks. There had been so many proofs of his lover's feelings. And then his manner when he had parted with her the night before!

Yet the thought of Fidus's love for her stirred not so much her heart as her imagination. The

gratification it gave her was primarily that of the actress, of one possessing the dramatic temperament to an abnormal degree, who saw herself placed in a situation full of dramatic possibility. If Fidus permitted his love for her to master him, it would precipitate them in a tragic issue; for Leonore read the other's nature sufficiently clearly to understand that the *chansonnier* would suffer through his moral scruples—would regard their love as profanation of his most sacred sentiments. He would figure in his own eyes as a Hippolyte who had yielded to the seductions of a Phèdre.

It was this thought over which Leonore, in her dejection at the failure of her dress rehearsal, had brooded in driving home after parting with Fidus at the Palais-Royal entrance. All the morbidness of her nature—which so sharply contrasted with her exhilaration and sanguine moods—had been excited by her ineffectual acting at the rehearsal, by Ginisty's displeasure, by the general disappointment of the important occasion. And an idea—an idea that had already found nurture in her soul, the day she and Fidus had visited the Louvre—grew into dominant life. She would purchase the power to be an inspired Phèdre upon the stage by playing the part of Phèdre in real life—purchase it at what might perhaps be a tragic price. But what risk, what sacrifice, would she not willingly undergo to realise her stage ambitions? She was not woman; she was only actress—actress with whom nothing

counted, neither honour, nor gratitude, nor natural feeling, save one thing—her art!

It was one of those prematurely mild days of spring when the sunshine had almost the caressing warmth and brightness of summer; and Fidus and Leonore had their coffee out on the balcony, with the gardens of the Palais-Royal basking below.

"Joseph is such a treasure," Leonore remarked, as she leaned back in her wicker chair. "Those *bouchées* were absolutely ravishing; the *fonds d'art-chauts* divine!" She smiled, full of physical content.

"You're fond of good things to eat, aren't you?"

"Yes; I confess it," she returned. "I like good things to eat; I like beautiful things to wear; I like everything round me to be as luxurious as may be. I'm a materialist, Fidus. I love life; I love the sheer act of living. I hope that I shall live—not to be old (I hate old age!), but as long as the world is enjoyable, as long as my blood is red, as long as I've beauty to please others with, and move them to respond to me. Ah, Fidus, what mere living means to me! I know it"—with a shrug—"that I've no soul. I have emotions, but no soul!" Leonore's egotism often took the form of self-analysis. It was perhaps one of her virtues that she was so frank with herself.

Fidus sat thoughtful, weighing the woman before him.

Yes, she spoke truth. It was her senses, not her soul—emotions, not mind—that made Leonore what

she was—the artist, the sonorous, flexible - toned instrument on which it had always pleased him to play. Rachel had been like her: Rachel, who had needed her teacher Samson's intellectual wings—the wings that had lifted her in immortal flights. Rachel had possessed no soul.

The *chansonnier's* meditations disposed him to more charitable judgments of his companion. Let moralists argue as they might, he mused, human nature is hampered by its own phenomena; and, like water, it can rise no higher than its own level. Leonore belonged to the world of human beings the riddle of whose psychology remains unsolved for all the contentions of philosophers ancient and modern. Hers was that ironic gift of the gods — genius. When had genius spared the vehicle wherein its voice found utterance? The children of the Muses had of old been deemed mad; while scientists of to-day, in their dissection, had pronounced their powers tainted by disease. Fidus knew only too well the melancholy secrets of inheritors of some one great talent; the misery springing from their one-sidedness; how marred were their natures in the making; what shortcomings were theirs tested in the scales of normality and the common principles of life. He had only to look into his own breast for understanding of these things.

Did he really love Leonore? he asked himself.

The distraught condition of the night before, that blighting shadow of the soul which had fallen a

moment to withdraw again, had left him curiously impersonal towards Leonore. Too depleted to feel physical emotion, he could question his feelings for her as a physician diagnoses a patient's state of mind and body.

Did he love her? Yes, he loved her as one loves one's own masterpiece, cunningly, laboriously fashioned, into which one has poured one's aspirations, one's whole nature. He loved her, too, because she was beautiful. Leonore Redway, for all her irregularity of features, her faults of contour and colouring, possessed a veritable, if evasive beauty. Her looks had none of the stereotyped loveliness of Empire art; the face was mobile, strongly accented. Illusion in her was always more or less dominant; she had the power of satisfying the imagination, satisfying it even against the will.

"How bright the sun is!" she said. "It is truly golden—like these tulips, like this chartreuse." She drank the last drop in her glass with lingering pleasure. "There's sun in this liqueur of yours, Fidus—the warm golden sun of the South!"

The good luncheon, the generous Burgundy, the crisp sunshine had tuned her to the highest note of her being, called out all her nature's richness. She leaned dreamily in her chair, abandoned to luxurious emotions. The last few months had wrought a great change in Leonore. She had come to Paris a girl, though her self-assurance made her seem older, as it often concealed her crude, undeveloped sides.

She was a woman now, and a woman in whom capacity for enjoyment had greatly increased.

"What a creature of the sense!" was Fidus's inward comment. "What youth, what health!"

"Another drop of chartreuse," Leonore remarked after a moment, "and then we must work."

"Work? What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am going to do Phèdre. Come along."

"Are you mad?" Fidus exclaimed. "Not a line, not a scene to-day."

"Not a line, not a scene!" she mimicked. "The whole part, my friend! I must give myself the proper confidence for to-night."

"Leonore, this is simply folly. You might do better now, but you would do worse this evening in consequence. There is no greater mistake than work the day of a performance. It enervates, robs of all freshness. Rest here in the sunshine; you must save yourself for to-night."

"On the contrary, I am rested." And she began:

*"N'allons plus avant; demeurons, chère Enone,
Je ne me soutiens plus; ma force m'abandonne."*

"We'll only read the play, then," Fidus grudgingly conceded. "I shall take all the parts except Phèdre."

"Then you will be Thésée and Hippolyte both," she said meaningly.

A look of annoyance came into the other's face, but he deigned no reply.

They entered the *salon*, and Leonore, selecting a seat on the divan, stretched herself among the cushions, her hands clasped behind her great coil of blond hair.

Fidus began reading the opening dialogue between Hippolyte and Theramène, his *confidant*, which C  none, the nurse, interrupts by entering with news of her mistress's mysterious grief. Under the *chansonnier's* mastery the stately verse of Racine lost the monotony of Alexandrine couplet; and Leonore, as she listened, thought that never before had *Ph  dre* breathed such a spirit of sonorous poetry.

At last the Queen herself makes an appearance.

Leonore, without shifting her position, began to recite her lines in a voice hardly above a whisper; her eyes were closed, darkened to all not *Ph  dre*, to all that was not tragedy and high passion.

With the first word she uttered Leonore felt the sombreness of *Ph  dre's* misery and heart-longing close round her spirit. She agonised under the malign fire that wasted the royal veins, and her voice, in its tense, low-toned vehemence, flowed over the sense of her listener with troubling power. Leonore's capacity of identifying herself with her *r  les* gave her recitation at times a startling vividness. The interview between the Queen and her stepson contains some of the most inspired lines of the play. *Ph  dre* speaks of the dark under-world whither she believes

Thésée descended, telling Hippolyte that he need never more expect to see his sire ; for—

*“ Not twice doth mortal eye behold the shores of Death ;
And since those darkling realms Thésée has visited,
Vain were the hope that e’en a god can him return—
Never voracious Acheron yields up his prey.”*

Thrilling, Leonore recited these lines.

Fidus laid down his book ; and their eyes met. A wave passed over them, and they were fanned by deathly wings of Memory.

Leonore continued after a pause :

*“ What do I say ? He is not dead, he lives in you.
Ever before my eyes I think I see my spouse ;
I see him, speak to him, my heart——”*

Confusion that was not all simulated—a sense of her audacity in thus addressing Fidus—seized her as she faltered :

*“ But I forget—
The madness of my love speaks out in spite of all !”*

The *chansonnier* grew pale ; she saw, through half-closed lids, how she affected him. The impulse to conquer stirred her veins with excitement ; and with all the art with which she was endowed, Leonore began the speech wherein Phèdre openly declares her sentiments for Hippolyte.

Fidus dashed the book to the floor, and went out on the balcony.

Raised on one arm, she looked after him. She saw him leaning against the balcony rail, his misshapen back towards her.

What had she done?

Fidus had understood her; and the veil of reserve between them was for ever rent in twain. There was no retreat; she must meet the moment that she had succeeded in making dramatic. Did she love him? She only knew that the fever of Phèdre was in her blood—and that it made her bold.

She rose and went to the open balcony door.

Though he felt her presence Fidus made no sign.

At last he could endure it no longer. He turned and confronted her as she stood there in the doorway.

"Why do you torment me?" he said hoarsely. "Have you no honour, that you tempt me to forget mine!"

"Fidus!"

"You would kill my faithfulness as you killed my friend?"

His eyes blazed with excitement, but she met them defiantly.

"Let the dead be dead," she answered. "And do not call *me* guilty! Did you not love me while he still lived?"

"You dare say that?" Fidus hurled the words at her. "Let me pass—Phèdre!"

Her arms tried to bar the way, but he pushed by her.

"I say what is true," she cried, following him into the room; "and you know it to be true. I have not been blind. Have you forgot Caliban?"

His gesture would have silenced her.

"You loved me then, Fidus. Why did you not speak your love?"

"Enough!"

"Why did you not claim me? You were strong—your strength would have held me."

"Enough, enough!"

"I never loved René."

"Silence, for God's sake! You drive me mad."

He flung himself into a chair. Bending over him, she hoarsely breathed:

"*Know Phèdre in all her fury!*" And she struck her breast passionately. "Know *me*, Fidus. Know that *I* am Phèdre; that no consideration, no duty to the living or the dead, matters to me. You love me, Fidus!"

He rose, and with brusque strength thrust her back.

"Madame," he said sternly, "you forget your *début* is to-night. I leave you."

Her *début* that night? She had forgot!

Alone, she reflected soberly that Fidus was right. She must save herself for her *début*.

Let artistic success come first. Afterwards——

She seated herself in Fidus's abandoned chair, and re-read *Phèdre*.

The scene just lived through illumined the play for her. Phrases formerly with small significance to her seemed freighted now with meaning. She tried to impress upon her mind these new inspirations: she could use them to advantage that night.

At last she put down her book, satisfied that success was doubly sure.

It was growing late. Ringing for Joseph, she had him bring her wine and biscuits.

After thus refreshing herself, she made ready for the theatre.

Emotion came over her at the thought how soon she would be Phèdre on the historic boards of the Odéon.

She sought a mirror, and stood some minutes before it, gazing critically at herself. A sigh of satisfaction escaped her lips. She had never been more beautiful.

If only there were some one to wish her good luck!

The Seven Deadly Sins looked down from the wall. No good wishes from them!

Her wandering eyes fixed on the portrait of René Bouchard.

"Wish me success, René!" she said out loud. "Wish it—in spite of all. It was not my fault that I never loved you."

About to leave, Leonore paused, hand on door.

The room seemed so full of significance. Did it speak to her of what had passed—or of what was to be?

Through the windows streamed the red glare of sunset.

She went out on the balcony.

Behind the blackened roofs of the Palais-Royal

the sun sank gloriously in a crimson mass of clouds. The whole west was aglow.

Lifting her arms as might have done a priestess of Persian sun-worship, Leonore recited the words of Phèdre :

"Sun! I salute thee for the last time!"

She watched the orb of day sink into its fiery bed.

The light and warmth were gone.

Leonore shivered, as if an icy hand had been laid on her heart.

"For the last time!" she whispered in awed tones.

CHAPTER VII

THE SUPREME CARESS

THE curtain fell on the first Act of *Phèdre*.

The Odéon Theatre, with its dingy Moorish effects and lustres of raw light, had drawn together a considerable number of spectators to witness Leonore's *début*. The house was hardly a fashionable one, for the Odéon had lost its popularity with Society, owing to its stranded position in a part of Paris regarded by the residents of the newer quarters as almost an excursion in the provinces. But the notoriety Mademoiselle Redway's name had acquired through the scandal of René's suicide had tempted curiosity. Many persons had come to see the woman rather than the actress. The story of the Bouchard tragedy was being thoroughly aired again. Bearded students of the Latin Quarter discussed it with their mistresses; it enlivened the upmost gallery, crowded with shoemakers, bookbinders, and bloused workmen; the *ouvreuses*, in their black gowns and beribboned caps, out in the corridors, gossiped about it over their knitting.

The audience had remained unmoved during the

first Act. The public, having satisfied their curiosity about Leonore, listened with indifference to the familiar play. The critics, on whom the new actress's fate depended, had come predisposed to ridicule the young American aspirant attempting a grand *rôle* of the French classics. The applause was accordingly feeble, despite the mechanical demonstrations of the *claqueurs* and the good intentions of Louis Damart and his Salle de Garde—for Leonore's old admirer had not forgotten his promise, made in Cours Bassot days, to assist at her *début*.

Leonore's acting had been pronounced colourless in the first all-important scenes with the nurse Œnone, which, as Fidus had cautioned, were the quicksands of the *rôle*. Phèdre's *tirades* had been given in accents intense and convincing enough, but, unfortunately, in so low-voiced a tone that the effect had not carried beyond the footlights.

Leonore had arrived at the theatre still under the reaction of feeling she had experienced when leaving Fidus's apartment. The wrench of nerves had been too severe for her to regain the calm she needed to do herself justice in this critical juncture of her artistic career.

Besides, she had counted on finding the *chansonnier* in the box with Ginisty and Paul Mounet—and the seat was empty!

The Odéon Director was too clever to allow time between the first and second Acts of the

play for the dissatisfaction to spread through the audience; and the curtain rose promptly on Act Second.

These scenes—long speeches between the minor characters, Aricie and her *confidant*—are typically Racinian, being rich in beautiful couplets that nicely dissect the tender passion. Such flowers of discourse never fail to delight a French public, and they commanded the attention now. The actress who played Aricie put her best efforts into her part, purposing to profit by the failure of the “star” to shine in the preceding Act.

Charmed by Aricie, the house awakened from its lethargy; and Leonore, on receiving her cue, was greeted by a changed atmosphere. During the wait her thoughts were busy with Fidus. What had caused his absence? Was he still angry over what had occurred that afternoon, or had he been taken ill? She recalled his ghastly face, his blazing eyes, the sternness of his voice, when he left her. Why had she committed the folly of offending him on the eve of her first great venture as an actress! It was with a heavy heart that Leonore passed out upon the stage.

In the second Act Phèdre on entering sees Hippolyte, object of her criminal love, and in an aside to C  none exclaims:

“~~He~~ *is there; from my heart all the blood retreats;*
 . . . ~~In~~ *beholding him, I forget what I have come to say.*”

Leonore came on, and with a weariness that she

was really far from only feigning, advanced towards the footlights where the young hero stood.

The Director's stall was close by, and as she turned towards Hippolyte her eyes instinctively glanced at the occupants.

There, in the chair that was reserved for him, she saw Fidus, his dress disordered, his visage strangely drawn and sallow.

Leonore started, caught Œnone by the arm, and in a voice that her relief at beholding the *chansonnier* made infinitely thrilling, repeated the lines :

*"Le voici ; vers mon cœur tout mon sang se retire,
J'oublie, en le voyant, ce que je viens lui dire."*

Her voice, the gesture in which accident and art expressed itself, caused the speech to carry well.

A slight murmur ran through the audience.

The critics, however, preserved their patronising calm.

The play continued. Phèdre, forgetting all self-restraint, confesses to Hippolyte her guilty sentiments.

It was this passage which Leonore had that afternoon breathed into Fidus's ear with such intensity, putting into it her supreme effort to conquer the man she was tempting to forget his vows. She rendered it now with inspiration so undeniable that, as she finished, the aged critic, Francisque Sarcey, in his traditional *baaignoire*, exclaimed : "*C'est ça, bravo !*"

This gave the signal for general applause. The other critics, who had already in their heads penned

withering articles on "the American Phèdre," followed the example of *l'Oncle Sarcy*, as the illustrious *doyen* of theatrical critics was called.

Leonore's success was made !

From the moment when she uttered this deciding apostrophe, in which her soul found expression for its divine fire, through the lofty opportunities the play affords, to the end where Phèdre expires at the feet of her royal spouse, victim of sombre retribution, Leonore continued to sway her audience. It seemed almost as if the spirit of the passionate and ill-fated queen of antiquity, responsive to the oblations Leonore had poured out to her shade, had entered the body of the actress, animating each inflexion of her voice, each gesture of the white arms she raised in prayer to the gods or in anguished appeal to love. Far above any previous manifestation of power Leonore rose. Inspiration chastened and made sure all that Fidus had taught her, all that she had taught herself. Her interpretation was in a measure the flash of the moment. A clear knowledge seemed to come to her how the part should be supremely played, with all its truths triumphant, and this led her on until the curtain descended for the last time, and she was called forth again and again to receive the tributes of an excited house. She had achieved beyond the peradventure ; the shining heights of genius were in her grasp. Leonore had proved herself a great actress ; the future was hers.

It had been after the third Act that, in the *Foyer des*

Artistes, Leonore had received the congratulation of friends and critics. Paul Mounet had tears of pride in his eyes. His favourite had surprised him by her acting that night despite his high expectations. Ginisty, the Director, who had half repented engaging Leonore because of the dress rehearsal failure, was radiant now with satisfaction. Little Yvonne, her face crimson with eagerness, pressed among the others, drawing her lover by the hand. The young physician—for Damart had received his doctor's degree—hesitated, thinking Leonore might yet remember the hospital insult, yet he wished to offer his compliments with the rest. He and his Salle de Garde had sent the actress a costly basket of roses in memory of the honour she had done them by reciting at their *fête*.

Smilingly Leonore received the admiring circle; but she hid an ache under the flowing white robes of Phèdre.

There was one drop lacking to her cup of triumph.

Fidus had not come to take her hand, and tell her that the night's success compensated for their weary months of labour together.

Why had he remained away?

Her eyes, brilliant with excitement, sought him everywhere, but in vain.

Once she fancied that she saw the familiar misshaped figure standing gazing at her from the shadows of the *coulisse*.

But when she looked again the face had vanished.

The audience had dispersed; the *salle* of the theatre was deserted. Many of the Odéon company, with a perfunctory word of farewell to the new star, had hurried away, when Leonore made her solitary exit from the stage entrance.

As she stepped out into the gloom of the grey-pillared arcades, her heart gave a sudden throb of relief.

Two men were standing there engaged in conversation, and in one she recognised the *chansonnier*.

He was talking with Francisque Sarcey, who, at sight of the young actress, called her to him.

"I have been speaking with monsieur about you, mademoiselle," he said. "I am interested in a Phèdre who comes from Chicago, *via* the Boulevard Clichy! I should have visited monsieur's *cabaret*—the *cabaret* of the Cardinal Virtues, or was it the Five Senses?—but, you know, I never have an evening free. Yes, I have missed only *one* night at the theatre in over thirty-five years! A record, eh, mademoiselle, is it not? Come to one of my Friday lunches, and there, in all form and before journalistic witnesses, I shall predict you a brilliant future. *Bonne chance, ma petite!*"

Fidus escorted the aged critic to his carriage, the springs of which gave ominously under his Falstaffian bulk.

Another cab drove up. Leonore mutely entered, expecting that Fidus would follow. But instead, he held out his hand.

"Mademoiselle," he said formally, "your Phèdre has been all I hoped; you have achieved a great success to-night, and you will go on to the heights. You need me no more. This must be our farewell; I am leaving Paris——"

"You are going away!"

"Yes, I leave to-morrow for my old home—for Alsace; and I would prefer to say good-bye now."

"Fidus, you do not mean it!" she cried. "You cannot intend to part with me in this way!"

"It must be," he answered in the same tone. "Some day we shall meet again. Mademoiselle, I bid you farewell!" And, lifting his hat, he turned away.

"Fidus!" she called after him. But he had disappeared within the shadowy arcades.

Leonore sat dazed in the waiting cab. It was only upon the driver twice demanding the address that she heard.

"What address?—Place Vintimille."

Motionless in her seat, her eyes staring before her, Leonore listened mechanically to the dull rumbling of the vehicle. Her whole being was stunned; her brain seemed capable of nothing beyond repeating Fidus's words monotonously.

Gradually she awakened from her paralysis of feeling. She began to cope with what had taken place, to realise that Fidus had parted with her for ever.

An intolerable pain of the heart warned her that

her life henceforth was to be one agonising prayer for the return of this man who had left her; that under its crushing sorrow everything that she had prized, her art, her beauty, her youth, would die out in her. Her future would be a desert waste; she would dwell in the darkness of grim and ageing despair.

She loved him. The passion of her love searched her through and through. She felt it like the rack of the torture chamber. It fastened its gyves upon her, and forbade her to cry out. It kept her eyes dry of tears. And she could only sit there motionless, her lips set, her hands lying lax upon her lap.

She loved him. It was life's punishment on the heart that had never known sympathy or suffering, the heart she had carried cold and unmoved in her breast as she passed on through the world selfishly seeking her own ends, sacrificing the woman in her to the actress's ambition. No, she had remained unaffected by common things; human appeals had been but shadows along her path. She had played with passions, deceiving herself as she had deceived others.

Now all was different. The Leonore that had never lived, lived now. Art was no longer her supreme master; but Love. Life could never again be but the understudy to the greater significance of the stage. She loved; she loved Fidus.

She loved him—and he was leaving her.

The cab was rolling on its way to Place Vintimille,

and every moment shortened the time of Fidus's stay in Paris. He had told her that he was leaving on the morrow.

Suddenly she signalled to the coachman and told him to drive to the Palais-Royal.

Reaching the *chansonnier's* apartment, she threw off her wraps, telling the servant that his master was following and would not need him. Then, when alone, she began walking up and down the long *salon*, pausing at times to listen, under the fancy that she heard the *chansonnier's* steps.

Fidus might arrive at any moment; and she had not formulated her ideas. Her only thought was that she must prevail upon him not to leave Paris. The calm that had possessed her in the cab had passed, and Leonore was now in an extraordinary nervous state.

He did not come——

Minute after minute passed. The atmosphere of the apartment grew more and more oppressive. The very furniture seemed to speak; the silence watched and waited as if full of a mysterious comprehension of coming events. The place was heavy with hostility. The carven Sins, ranged along the wall, appeared hideously alive to her presence, eyeing her like confederates plotting some ill deed.

Moved by impulse to see herself as she would look when Fidus arrived, Leonore approached the mirror where she had studied herself before going

to the theatre. Her face then had been brilliant in its youth and beauty. Now the face that met her own was shadowed with anxiety. She drew nearer, seeking to read in her dark eyes a message of Fate. The eyes looked back at her so strangely ; she felt almost as if the image there was the ghost of her dead self summoned from the grave.

As she turned away she felt a sickening sensation at her heart, and she caught hold of a chair to support herself. For an instant there seemed to flash across her vision the red sunset she had watched that afternoon from the balcony, when, lifting her arm, she had recited Phèdre's invocation to the orb of day :

"Soleil, je te viens voir pour la dernière fois !"

For the last time !

A chill crept across her, the dread that had seized her earlier that day, after Fidus's departure ; a dread the worse because indefinable.

What misfortune was about to overtake her ?

She felt as if a darkness lay spread before her. It was like the darkness which came upon her in the last Act of Phèdre, when she had fallen at the feet of Thésée.

Was she still so identified with the character she had acted she could not shake off its horrors ?

Was it — was it that the gods had heard her prayer ?—she who had asked that she might think,

feel, *be* Phèdre, no matter what the price? And the price—was it to be the doom of Phèdre?

But how wild her fancies!

What evil could befall her? She was young, strong; life was full of promise; why, she stood on the very threshold of fame!

But her dread only increased.

No, no; she could not remain here; she must leave, escape——

Hurriedly she caught up her cloak from the chair. At the same moment a key grated in the hall door.

Terror fled, passion again supreme, Leonore waited.

“You see, Fidus,” she said, “I am here. I could not let you leave me as if we were nothing to each other.”

Fidus had stopped short in the doorway at sight of his visitor.

There was something so strange in his whole appearance that Leonore could hardly repress an exclamation of dismay. His hair was matted on his seamed forehead as if with sweat; his mouth, which had always struck her as his least attractive feature, had the loose look of exhaustion. He was paler even than when she had caught a glimpse of him in the Director’s box. The eyes he fixed upon her were dark with sternness.

“So you wish to make it as difficult for me as possible!” he said, as he closed the door.

“You are angry with me, Fidus?”

His impatient gesture seemed to rebuke the idleness of the question. He walked over to the fireplace, where the coals were crumbling to ashes, while Leonore remained appealingly where she had been arrested by his entrance, separated from him by a lamp-lit table heaped with its books and ornaments. Her fur-lined cloak had dropped from her hand, and her tall figure was revealed, robed in simple black, badge of her bereavement as René's betrothed, and worn still from habit. Strain of feeling gave its own new beauty. The eyes turned to Fidus had never been more strikingly deep, the rich, mobile mouth more inviting than now in its troubled lines. Leonore would have moved most men. But to Fidus, worn with struggle with himself, she was only the woman who tempted him in his new-found resolves; the woman who recognised none of the finer duties of character; who respected herself so little as to be incapable of respecting what was best in him. He saw her through the memory of the afternoon's outrage of faith owed René; through the evil glamour of her inspired rendering of Phèdre that night when she had seemed to tear the veil from her own soul. And antagonism and distaste guarded him against her physical charm.

"Leonore, this must not, cannot be," he said at last. "It would have been better had you let me say good-bye to you at the Odéon. Parting would have been easier for us both. I must go away; I

decided that this afternoon. I am resolved to end what should never have begun."

She did not speak, and he added:

"Say good-bye, and go back to your art. Live for that; and put me out of your life."

"Fidus, I love you!"

All the emotional woman, all the trained actress, conscious that a few hours before she had swayed a great audience—all that was art, all that was instinct—expressed itself in this cry of the heart.

"Fidus, I love you, and you love me!"

"That is why we must part," he answered. "It is late. Stay here—let me leave."

"No; neither you nor I shall leave. There can be no such parting as this between us. I have come to speak, and you must stay to listen."

"I refuse to listen!" And he started towards the door.

But she intercepted him with a swift movement.

"No, no, you shall not go! It is too cruel; it is unjust. I love you. Why have I not the right to love you? I am a woman, not a puppet. You bid me go back to my art. What is my art to me? I want your love. I cannot live without you, Fidus. I cannot—I *will* not!" Her arms endeavoured to hold him back.

"No!" And he pushed her from him resolutely—so roughly that she fell upon her knees. But she still clung to him, exclaiming:

"Strike me—kill me—but love me!"

With a groan of torture he moved towards the door. Leonore let herself be dragged, retarding his steps.

As he broke from her embrace, her loosening arms left her stretched on the floor.

Raising her to her feet, he threw her cloak about her.

"Go!" he said.

His face was stricken to ghastliness, and in his blood-shot eyes shone a dry light.

"I shall never go!"

"Go!" he repeated.

"Never!"

This was not the Leonore who, victim of unaccountable dreads, had been about to flee Fidus's apartment. An elemental woman stood there, possessed of a passion that knew no fear; that was too strong to yield to defeat.

"Woman, you shall not conquer me!"

"I have conquered you," she replied. "You love me, Fidus!"

The triumph of her tone held him there despite himself.

"You dare speak of love—you, whose heart should be in the grave with the man you killed! See"—and he pointed to the portrait of René on the wall—"there is the witness of your falseness. Look at that face, and cease to insult the past with your shameless words. Do you think I can ever forget, that any-

thing you can say shall move me in the presence of that memory!"

"I never loved him—I never loved but you, Fidus!"

"Then strip from your body the mockery of grief that was never yours!" he said, his eyes blazing. "It was thus you came to me, shedding your actress tears while you sued for pardon! The pardon I granted when I should have driven you from me with curses!"

"My tears were real, but they were for you, Fidus—though I did not know!"

"Then you won him as you killed him—by your falseness!"

"There is no falseness where there was no faith! He asked my love, and I gave him all I had to give—my pity. It is he you should curse. He knew you loved me, yet he took me from you. Curse him, Fidus, for he came between us. Curse him—as I curse him that he ever lived!"

A sound, horrible in its animal-like fury, issued from Fidus's lips as he struck her.

She fell back against the table, her hands groping for support. Near her lay a rare ornament—a gold condor's claw holding an ivory egg. She caught it up and dealt him a retaliating blow across the face, so that the blood streamed. Panting with excitement she kept her defensive attitude, her eyes watching him as he confronted her.

But Fidus, with the dazed air of a man shaken

from sleep, turned away. Tottering as far as the divan, he seated himself; his head dropped upon his breast.

Seeing what she had done, Leonore went to him, and throwing herself upon her knees, kissed the bleeding wound again and again.

"Ah," she said, "see what you have made me do! Forgive me, Fidus!"

He paid no heed, but sat there, his eyes staring vacantly before him. The dull expression on his face tore her with remorse, and taking his inert hands she pressed them reverently to her lips.

"Fidus," she murmured sadly, "why does love make us suffer so? Why does it make us cruel and selfish? Ah, Fidus, Fidus! I am a woman, and weak, and I love. If I could leave you, I would—but I cannot. I don't want you to suffer because of me; I don't want you to suffer for any reason; I don't want you to suffer at all. But you must not leave me—and I cannot leave you." And her face fell against his knees.

There was silence for a moment. Then Fidus drew Leonore to his breast and began stroking her hair. He stroked it tenderly, entwining his fingers with the loose blond strands on which the lamp-light fell.

"So you have come back to me, Margot."

At the strange name she lifted her head and looked at him.

He was smiling dreamily down upon her.

"Margot—dear little Margot!"

"Fidus," she cried wonderingly, "do you not know me—I am Leonore."

"Then why are you not with René?"

"But René is dead, Fidus!"

A look of sadness passed into his face.

"He was very young to die," he said in a musing tone. "Ah, I remember; it was you who killed him."

"I did not kill him," she answered, recoiling. "Why do you speak so strangely?"

"I see it there."

"What?" she asked, trembling.

"Why, René's blood." He was looking at her stained hand. "How red it is!" he said. His gaze shifted slowly to her throat, as he added: "And how white your neck!"

"Fidus, kiss me," she whispered wildly, "and do not look so!"

"No, no, not your lips," he answered, "it is your soul I want—your wonderful soul." His eyes still stared as if fascinated at her throat.

"Your soul—your wonderful soul," he repeated. "Let me see it—the soul of my Sphinx—I want to see it."

"Fidus, do not frighten me so!"

"No, no—it is only your soul I want—I put it there—give it back again."

She tried to escape the hand, the morbid hand with the strange rings, that had slowly changed from caressing to a clutch.

"Fidus, you hurt me—you hurt me!"

As she struggled she almost freed herself, holding him back at arm's length. But terror robbed her of force. Her head fell against the pillows, and the implacable hand was again at her throat.

"Your soul——"

He hesitated. The strange look of Leonore's eyes perplexed his irresponsibility. Then with new impulse the cramping fingers closed.

At the sight of the open mouth, he bent nearer as if to inhale her breath.

A hopeless moan issued from her.

Across her dimming eyes swam pictures—foot-lights, the audience at the Odéon—René lying in the Morgue—Fidus in the Palais-Royal Gardens—the sombre stare of his greeting on entering——

Then came—Night.

Death had stamped Leonore's face with its grim stigma. He still repeated :

"Her soul—the Soul of the Sphinx."

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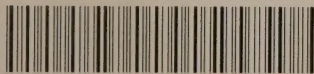
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